Advance briefing
Migrants are smuggled in all regions of the world
How many migrants are smuggled?

The total number of smuggled migrants and smuggling profits are unknown. However, along selected routes, a minimum of 2.5 million people were smuggled in 2016, generating revenues for some US$ 5.5-7 billion for smugglers.
Smuggling of migrants is a big business with high profits

Aggregating information on what is known and reported, UNODC found that in 2016:

- At a minimum, along selected routes, **2.5 million migrants** were smuggled
- For an economic return of **US$5.5-7 billion**
Supply and demand

Factors determining the demand for smuggling:

- Need to migrate due to armed conflict, persecution, socio-economic hardship or other reasons
- Mobility regulations and restrictions
- Expensive and lengthy procedures to obtain regular travel documents
- Marketing and misinformation by smugglers
- Smugglers' recruitment and community pressure

Services supplied by smugglers:

- Transportation, guiding and escorting during irregular border crossing
- Accommodation along the route
- Planning and contacts along the route
- Information and corruption
- Travel documents (counterfeit, false, fraudulently obtained, etc.)
Smuggling fees

Factors that influence smuggling fees

- Risk of detection
- Transportation method and conditions
- Distance between origin and destination
- Migrants’ perceived wealth
- Geographic and weather conditions
- Use of false or fraudulently obtained travel or identity documents
- Number of border crossings
Smuggling routes change but hubs are stable

Routes are determined by:
- Geography
- Border control
- Migration policy in destinations
- Smugglers’ connections across countries
- Cost of the package offered by smugglers

Hubs serve as:
- Meeting places where disparate routes converge
- Places to arrange subsequent travel
Smugglers and migrants:

- Have ethnic and linguistic ties
- Come from the same community

Smugglers:

- Have extensive knowledge of the territory and the best methods to reach the destination
The organization of migrant smuggling

**Hierarchical**
- Well-organized, often long journeys across multiple borders

**Networks**
- Looser networks where collaboration is occasional

**Mixed**
- Mix of networks and individual smugglers

**Individuals**
- Individual smugglers often acting opportunistically (may be resident in border areas)
Business of smuggling

Different activities at different stages:

• At origin: Recruitment and publicizing the services
• Along the route: Transportation, housing, border crossing
• At destination: Arrangements for stay

Different ways to organize smuggling:

• Comprehensive package from origin to destination
• Several independent or connected legs
• Territorial control by smugglers
Corruption

Systematic corruption at most levels and along all the identified routes involving:

- Petty corruption at individual border control points
- Grand corruption at higher levels of government
- Corruption of officials to obtain travel documents to which the traveler is not entitled
Smuggling networks may have links with other criminal organizations

- To pay for the ‘right’ to safe passage for migrants
- To hand over migrants for extortion of ransom, robbery or other abuse
- In some areas, migrants are smuggled along similar routes as illicit drugs and/or weapons
Most smuggled migrants are young men

Share of arrivals in Italy along the Central Mediterranean route by age and sex, 2015-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unaccompanied and separated children</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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</tbody>
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Migrant smuggling can be deadly

Migrants can be abused, assaulted, raped, exploited and killed

Deaths due to drowning or presumed drowning - sea routes, 3,597, 58%

Homicides - killed by human beings - land routes, 382, 6%

Deaths due to vehicle or train accidents - land routes, 482, 8%

Deaths due to harsh conditions and illness, 1,165, 19%

Deaths due to unknown/unreported reasons, 406, 7%

Other, 131, 2%