

Tuesday, 18 May 2021

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

Mr. Ilias Chatzis, Chief, Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section

Agenda item 5: Thematic discussion on effective measures to prevent and counter the smuggling of migrants, while protecting the rights of smuggled migrants, particularly women and children, and those of unaccompanied migrant children

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Distinguished representatives, partners and colleagues,

For the consideration of agenda item 5, the Commission has before it two Thematic Guides developed by the Secretariat in 2020 (E/CN.15/2020/6) and in 2021 (E/CN.15/2021/6).

Since the 28th session of the Commission, the fight against the smuggling of migrants has remained high on Member States' agendas, as demonstrated by the increasing level of ratification of the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol.

Nevertheless, significant work remains, especially in the context of the current pandemic, and the unprecedented global health, socioeconomic and humanitarian crisis.

UNODC data show that drivers of migration - present before the pandemic - have not only persisted but, in instances, increased.

Closed borders and reduced regular pathways for migration and asylum are pushing many migrants to resort to the illicit and often dangerous services of smugglers.

Stranded refugees and migrants have faced increased hardship and challenges in transit, at borders, and reception facilities in many regions.

To assist States in their responses to migrant smuggling, UNODC continues to offer multi-faceted support.

This week, UNODC launched the **Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants**, to research key smuggling routes and the dynamics of this crime.

A new analytical **study on aggravated smuggling** is also underway. It aims at supporting more targeted prevention, protection and prosecution of the most dangerous and abusive forms of migrant smuggling.

Despite the challenges posed by COVID19, UNODC continued to deliver technical assistance programmes during the pandemic. When travel was not possible, UNODC delivered online and remained in contact with relevant authorities through its extensive network of mentors on the ground.

In 2020-2021, UNODC managed thus to reach more than 40 countries and train over 620 practitioners on migrant smuggling.

A new training platform is currently being developed that would not only allow online training on migrant smuggling but would also facilitate the creation of a global network of national experts and promote experience-sharing.

UNODC remains keenly attuned to the related needs, challenges and priorities of States. For over 20 years, the Office has been supporting States to tackle migrant smuggling and ensure that the protection of smuggled migrants is an integral component in crime prevention and criminal justice responses.

Thank you for your attention.