Thank you for giving me the floor. I am making this statement on behalf of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and its Smuggling of Migrants Protocol, broke new ground and serves the international community as key legislative guides and international cooperation frameworks. But sadly, organized crime, including human smuggling, has become more pervasive and damaging than it was at the turn of the millennium – as demonstrated by the findings of our Global Organized Crime Index.

The Index shows rising criminality and that resilience (essentially a measure of state’s capacity to absorb and respond to organised crime) is failing to catch up. Despite the widespread ratification of the UNTOC and the smuggling of migrants Protocol, the international community has not been successful in stemming the growth of organised crime and illicit markets. There are various reasons why this is the case – to do with geopolitics, globalisation, technological advance, conflicts, and border and immigration policies – which go beyond the scope of this meeting. But even within the scope of this meeting, we unfortunately do not have the data necessary to judge how effective UNTOC and the Protocol have been in curbing human smuggling.

Data from the 2023 Organized Crime Index shows that all criminal markets grew in pervasiveness globally since 2021, with the global score for human smuggling increasing the most (by 0.39 points) driven in part by recent conflict situations, but still ranking as the 5th most pervasive criminal market.

However, over 20 years since the entry into force of the UNTOC and the Protocol, its Review Mechanism is only just starting. The progress on the developments and outcomes of the mechanism proceed at a slow pace, without a single country review finished, and its modalities are characterized by a lack of transparency and restricted civil society access and participation. We cannot, therefore, cross-reference and analyse the data from the Index on human smuggling against any specific data coming from the review mechanism.

At the same time, civil society continues to work tirelessly in support of efforts to prevent and counter human smuggling, and their data and experiences will continue to help fill this data gap.

Thank you.