

Tuesday, 13 October 2020

## **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

### **Agenda item 2(c): Smuggling of Migrants Protocol**

Thank you, Mister President, for the opportunity to introduce this agenda item.

Distinguished representatives, ladies and gentlemen.

The Conference has before it the *Report of the Secretariat on the activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to promote and support the implementation of the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (CTOC/COP/2020/3)*.

The ratification and accession of the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol increased by two more States since the last Conference of the Parties. Gabon and Palau brought the total number to 149 States Parties, confirming the growing global commitment to address this crime.

During the same period, much progress has been made in the implementation of the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol by State Parties with the updating of national laws in many countries to incorporate the Protocol's provisions and the strengthening of international cooperation against this crime.

UNODC continues to coordinate action with relevant counterparts to dismantle criminal networks engaging in the smuggling of migrants as well as trafficking in persons. In 2018, UNODC contributed to INTERPOL Operation Andes, during which officers across 11 countries acted on leads and carried out nearly 44,000 checks at air, land and sea borders in order to identify and disrupt smuggling routes and especially target the organized crime networks behind them. The four days of coordinated action saw 18 individuals arrested on migrant smuggling charges. Similarly, in 2019, UNODC contributed to INTERPOL Operation Turquesa, resulting in 97 arrests for migrant smuggling, 31 arrests for human trafficking and 24 for other crimes; the detection of 23 criminal organizations and 107 investigation files and the identification of 775 migrants, many of which had been smuggled, victims of rape, trafficking and other violent crimes.

Among other activities, UNODC organized multiple workshops and seminars aimed at criminal justice practitioners to address the existing gaps and legal limitations in detecting, investigating and prosecuting the smuggling of migrants. In addition, UNODC conducted extensive advocacy work by regularly engaging Senators and members of National Assembly culminating in May of 2018, when the parliament of Pakistan [passed](#) “The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2018” and “The Prevention of Smuggling of Migrants Acts, 2018”.

Also, UNODC continues supporting the Ibero-American network of specialized prosecutors against TIP and SOM ([REDTRAM](#)) including in the development of a new operational protocol supporting the development of joint investigation teams for investigating and prosecuting cases of migrant smuggling and human trafficking in the broad South American region.

Moreover, since 2017 UNODC [supported](#) the government of Colombia in developing a comprehensive strategy to address the Smuggling of Migrants. These efforts recently culminated in the adoption of the countries' first ever strategy to prevent and counter the smuggling of migrants by the third Intersectoral Commission to Combat Smuggling of Migrants on 25 March 2019.

Despite this progress there is still significant work needed to respond to emerging trends and patterns especially as a result of COVID-19. UNODC continues to monitor the impact of the pandemic to inform its support to Member States. A research brief published by UNODC in April 2020 noted that COVID-19 travel and movement restrictions seemed not to have stopped the movement of people fleeing conflict, human rights abuses, violence and dangerous living conditions and that the economic consequences of the pandemic were likely to lead to an increase in the flows of smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons from the most affected countries.

The adoption by the General Assembly of the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) (GA Res. 73/195), represents an important international landmark which contains dedicated powerful commitments by Member States regarding the ratification, accession to, and implementation of UNTOC and the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol. The Global Compact also provides for the establishment of a UN Network on Migration to ensure effective and coherent system-wide support to Member States in their implementation of the text. UNODC is one of the eight Members of the Network's Executive Committee, and thus the primary interlocutor in advancing the agenda on countering the smuggling of migrants and supporting related Member States' efforts implement the Smuggling Protocol in line with Global Compact's Objective 9.

Since the last session of the Conference, UNODC has continued its technical cooperation and capacity building efforts at the global level and through its field offices across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Between 2018–2020, more than 65 Member States received pre-ratification, legislative and/or strategic support in implementing the Protocol’s provisions. Under UNODC’s global programmes, UNODC organized or contributed to 26 legislative assistance and capacity-building activities, reaching over a thousand practitioners, government officials and civil society representatives from more than 70 countries.

Six countries (Ethiopia, Guatemala, Mali, Peru South Africa and Zambia) received targeted technical cooperation support at the national level to amend or update national legislation in accordance with international legal norms and standards and best practice in legislative development to counter the smuggling of migrants. The Programme organized a sub-regional workshop for the investigation and prosecution of the smuggling of migrants for border control authorities from Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Fifty-seven countries participated in technical cooperation activities addressing the smuggling of migrants (as well as trafficking in persons) at the national and regional levels.

As a measure to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, knowledge development efforts were carried out by means of remote capacity-building through the use of e-learning modules, which in the second quarter of 2020 alone were accessed by 203 practitioners (107 female, 96 male) from five countries (Chile, Guatemala, Malawi, Montenegro and North Macedonia) as well as Kosovo (UNSC Res. 1244).

The Conference is invited to discuss all issues relevant to the practical aspects of preventing and combating the smuggling of migrants, the protection of the rights of the smuggled migrants and how to cooperate to this end. The Secretariat would be grateful for all information that could be used to further enhance its technical assistance to States Parties.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for your attention.

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