

Thank you, Chair.

As other participants have stated, Brazilian authorities have also noted the impact of natural disasters, especially in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, on trends in the activities of organized criminal groups and on routes for the smuggling of migrants.

As you are aware, Brazil has been heavily affected by COVID-19.

My country, like others, adopted social isolation measures, as well as restrictions on mobility and trade, in order to contain the pandemic. We must recognize that such restrictive measures might hinder the identification, protection and investigation of the smuggling of migrants.

The closing of borders has favored an increase and diversification of smuggling routes, as well as favored the exploitation of immigrants. The movements of entry and exit from Brazilian territory were intensified through its land borders, particularly in areas of difficult inspection given the extensive land borders of Brazil's territory. The routes of irregular migration towards Brazil by air suffered a reduction given the restrictions in air transportation related to COVID-19 countermeasures.

On a different aspect of the issue, the conditions of poor hygiene and poor nutrition, caused by greater vulnerability, expose victims to a greater risk of contracting COVID-19 and other diseases, further intensifying the situation of vulnerability in which irregular migrants may find themselves. People in most vulnerable situations due to language differences, lack of appropriate documentation and insufficient living and subsistence conditions often are not aware of the existent means aimed at regularizing their situation in the country or obtaining assistance from public authorities. As a consequence, they end up having great difficulties in accessing basic rights.

In these pandemic times, the Federal Prosecutor's Office of Brazil has monitored compliance with victim assistance measures implemented by the government to ensure comprehensive care as determined by the Palermo Protocol, including, depending on the case, access to documentation, public health and the benefit of emergency aid granted by the government as we are going through the pandemic by COVID-19.

Another example relates to the role played by the Brazilian Federal Police in combating the smuggling of migrants. Our Federal Police is working hard towards repressing this crime throughout the country. Recently, one of the most relevant international criminal organizations was dismantled as a result of the work conducted by a task force known as Big Five Operation, in cooperation with American authorities.

For its part, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security published on March 23, 2020, Ordinance No. 87, which addresses the situation of victims of human trafficking, modern slavery and violation of rights associated with migratory condition in Brazil. According to this new regulation, residence permit requirements are made more flexible to immigrants in vulnerable conditions. If, for instance, the interested party does not have any document to prove the affiliation, it can present a self-declaration.

Mr. Chair,

A recommendation to the final report could be that countries take into consideration the situation of victims of smuggling of migrants when evaluating the requirements to grant residence permits. Lack of proper documentation, specially during the COVID-19 pandemic, could be, in special cases, overlooked.

Thank you.