

**Statement by ITALY on
Working Group on the Smuggling of Migrants**

Vienna, 5 and 6 October 2023

Agenda Item 3: Developments, challenges and best practices in preventing and combating the smuggling of migrants by sea.

M. Chair, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Smuggling of migrants is a heinous crime, exploiting for profit the needs of the most vulnerable, those fleeing poverty or war, or those who simply aspire to a better life. It is a serious crime, because of its modalities and implications and it is an ever-expanding crime: according to studies conducted by Europol, more than 90% of irregular migrants arriving in European territory have used traffickers during all or part of their journey.

Italy firmly believes that it is necessary to address the causes that lead to irregular migration, governing the migration phenomenon with a holistic approach, which addresses all the factors involved: from saving human life at sea to the reception of asylum seekers, from action on the root causes of migration to the establishment and effective management of legal channels for economic migration. As recalled by our Head of State, President Sergio Mattarella, migration is an "epoch-making phenomenon that must be governed with a vision of the future". It is a phenomenon that challenges consciences and concerns everyone's future and which, precisely because of its transversality and universal scope, must be tackled collectively, with the support of the United Nations,

However, while addressing the root causes of migration is the only effective answer in the long run, in the short term we have to work to tackle the smuggling of migrants. We cannot accept that migration is managed by smugglers and traffickers. This is a serious and growing risk in the Mediterranean – as in many other regions of the world – and we have seen from the short video before, and we know from the tragic number of lives lost in the last years, that smuggling of migrant by sea is extremely dangerous.

As a tangible sign of Italy's attention and commitment on this front, this very issue was a central topic of the Ministerial Conference hosted in Palermo on 29 September 2023, last Friday, organized by the Italian Government in cooperation with UNODC, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the UNTOC. 32 Delegations from the broader Mediterranean Region, led by 16 Ministers and 10 vice Ministers, gathered in Palermo and focused in particular on human trafficking and smuggling of migrants.

I wish to recall just two of the main outcomes of the meeting, hoping that this would inform our discussion for the adoption of recommendations:

- 1) The importance of enhancing international cooperation efforts in order to fully implement the Palermo convention and the Protocols on SOM and TIP: this could be done – in particular – by the establishment of joint investigations teams and joint investigations bodies and by the deployment of liaison magistrates and liaison officers.

- 2) The importance of a full utilization of the formidable and ductile tools provided by the UNTOC, and in particular those reflecting the teaching of Judge Giovanni Falcone, who thought that if you want to fight the mafia, you have to '*follow the money*'. I am referring to the instruments to target, seize and confiscate the proceeds of smuggling crimes before they are laundered into the legal economy or used for other illicit purposes, but also to the importance of ensuring liability of legal persons.

Thank you M. Chair