

STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
11th Session of the Working Group on Smuggling Migrants
Vienna, 11-12 July 2024
Agenda item 2

Mr. Co-Chair,

Türkiye fully supports strong international cooperation in the fight against transnational organized crime and we take all necessary measures for effective implementation of UNTOC and its Protocols.

Mr. Co-Chair,

The number of people fleeing from violence or instability has reached an unprecedented level. Türkiye has been under heavy migration pressure from her neighbors and countries of the region. We host the largest refugee population in the world, almost 4 million refugees and asylum seekers. We identified more than 254 thousand irregular migrants and apprehended 10.482 migrant smugglers in 2023 (By 4 July 2024, 109.653 irregular migrants and 6.405 migrant smugglers).

Türkiye continues to combat irregular migration as well as transnational crimes including migrant smuggling and human trafficking that are often brought along with such migratory flows. However, our unilateral efforts are not sufficient to cope with this global phenomenon. Migration requires a global and sustainable approach. Cooperation among countries of origin, transit and destination is key to a successful migration management.

Externalizing challenges posed by migration including transferring irregular migrants to other countries can only shelve the issue for a while. Challenges we face need strengthened cooperation and solidarity. Comprehensive, fair and just migration policies should include various aspects of this phenomenon:

1. Root causes should be addressed for long term and sustainable response to migration challenges.
2. Humanitarian and development assistance are crucial, while ensuring peace, stability and sustainable development in the long term.
3. Burden and responsibility sharing with the countries most touched by irregular migration movements is critical.
4. Enhancing resettlement opportunities is another imperative element in this aspect. Fair and realistic resettlement policies are needed.

Mr. Co-Chair,

On the other hand, we should not forget that the most durable solution for the refugees is voluntary returns. Türkiye strictly complies with the principle of non-refoulment and no one is forced to return. We continue our efforts to create proper and sustainable conditions on the ground to ensure safe and voluntary returns in dignity. We expect international community to

exert more efforts to create proper and sustainable conditions on the ground to ensure voluntary returns.

We also expect the resettlement numbers to increase. Fair and realistic resettlement policies are needed. We are open to working together on joint projects to realize voluntary, safe, and dignified returns.

Mr. Co-Chair,

The nexus between terrorism and transnational organized crime has become more evident. This relation was clearly acknowledged in the UN General Assembly Resolution 55/25 regarding the UNTOC.

Several operations conducted by the Turkish security forces against PKK/PYD/YPG, FETÖ and DEASH terrorist organization demonstrate the grim fact that the traffickers and organized criminal groups are strongly linked with terrorist organizations.

These terrorist organizations continue to take active role in migrant smuggling not only for financing their terror acts but also for abusing illegal migration routes to transfer their militants across countries, regions and even continents. It is safe to say that terrorist organizations are accomplices and learn from each other. Therefore, overlooking a human trafficking and/or migrant smuggling pattern of any terrorist group will inevitably lead to serious flaws in our joint efforts to eradicate the problem itself.

Mr. Co-Chair,

Türkiye is in close cooperation with civil society organizations in its fight against transnational organized crime and also to help and protect the victims.

We think that participation of the relevant stakeholders in the meetings, in line with the rules of procedure, and their contributions are important.

Mr. Co-Chair,

Transnational organized crime is one of the major challenges in the way to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Türkiye fully supports international cooperation in the fight against transnational crime and we will continue to take all necessary measures for effective implementation of UNTOC and its Protocols.

Thank you.