

UK Statement - Preventing and combating the smuggling of migrants through international cooperation while addressing its root causes, in line with the provisions of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto (Agenda Item 2)

Thank you, Chair, for giving me the floor. Thank you, panellists, for all your insightful contributions on this very important issue.

Globally, we are seeing increasing numbers of people undertaking lengthy, and often dangerous, journeys – sometimes across entire continents and spanning seas.

We also see criminal groups profiting from migrants' aspiration and vulnerability. Tackling these groups requires a coordinated and concentrated international effort.

We must therefore work closely together to combat the crime gangs that facilitate people smuggling by land, sea and air, that resort to the forgery of documents, and that engage in organised abuse of our visa systems.

We need to use our collective law enforcement powers, including sharing intelligence and conducting joined-up operational activity, to break the business models of organised crime groups; disrupt their supply chains; and “follow the money” to seize their ill gained assets. This includes targeting and seizing the supply of dangerous and unseaworthy vessels often used by migrant smugglers that pose a threat to life. In the UK this will be driven by our new Border Security Command.

Criminals have also integrated new and developing technologies into their business models: including social media to advertise, misinform

and recruit; and encryption to evade detection. We need, as an international community, to be more agile to keep pace with the evolving threat and ever more dangerous tactics from people smuggling gangs.

Taking a holistic approach, we must also consider the complex root causes of irregular migration – including conflict, violence, persecution, environmental degradation and climate change, and a lack of economic and social opportunities. As well as addressing root causes, we should also focus attention on increasing migrant awareness of journey risks, and strengthening borders and returns processes.

Migration management does not, and cannot, start at national borders. Building international partners' capacity to manage migration as a tool for development is crucial to tackling irregular migration. This in turn reduces the exploitation of the vulnerable and the pressures placed on communities across the migrant journey.

The UK's overseas aid budget is helping create prosperity and security around the world, boosting jobs and economic growth overseas. Our aid programmes are improving the long-term prospects of people in their own country, supporting them to stay there or nearby.

Overall, the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols continue to provide a valuable framework under which we can pursue collective international action against the migrant smuggling gangs. However, it is for us, as States, to ensure its effective implementation and to enhance cooperation. The UK looks forward to our continued work together to improve the implementation of the Convention around the world.

Thank you.