

**Remarks of the UNODC Executive Director  
15th Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference: People at risk: combating  
human trafficking along migration routes  
6 July 2015**

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished participants,**

Thousands of women, men and children are losing their lives at sea and on land, on deadly crossings, often organized by profit-seeking smugglers.

As the UN Secretary-General has said, “record numbers of people are fleeing war and persecution. Migrants are desperately trying to find a better life”.

Migrants are extremely vulnerable, and not only to the predations of smugglers. At every stage of their journey, they may be subject to violence and exploitation, and may be at risk of being victimized by traffickers.

This shocking and unacceptable situation remains a key challenge facing the international community today.

I would therefore like to thank the OSCE Special Representative, Ambassador Madina Jarbussynova, for organizing this timely discussion on this extremely important topic, at the valuable forum provided by the Alliance.

As part of the UN and international community’s comprehensive response, UNODC is supporting governments to take action against migrant smuggling, human trafficking and violence against migrants.

Our work is rooted in internationally agreed frameworks, namely the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols on trafficking and migrant smuggling, as well as UN standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice.

These provide a common, accepted foundation for joint action.

Based on this, we are helping to strengthen criminal justice responses, and ensure people receive the protection and assistance to which they are entitled.

The urgent need to enhance protection measures is especially evident in the context of migration.

As you know, human trafficking and migrant smuggling are legally distinct crimes.

Nevertheless, in real life we must deal with overlaps. In both cases, organized crime groups may be involved.

**Trafficking victims are often smuggled across borders. Smuggled migrants are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked.**

**Moreover, irregular migrants face a precarious situation, and are at risk of abuse, violence and exploitation throughout the migration process, from preparation to departure and transit, and after they reach their destinations.**

**As we have seen in the Mediterranean, in the Andaman Sea, in Latin America and in Africa, migration flows are mixed.**

**There are refugees, people fleeing persecution and conflict. Some migrants may be victims of trafficking being transported for exploitation at destination.**

**It is vitally important to ensure proper identification, to deliver appropriate responses.**

**But it must also be emphasized that in all cases, we are talking about human beings who need and deserve protection. This is made clear by the Protocols and other international agreements.**

The challenge remains to make better and full use of these agreed frameworks.

As UNODC reported in the latest Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, more than ninety per cent of countries have legislation criminalizing human trafficking.

However, not all forms of trafficking or their victims are clearly covered in these laws.

Even where suitable legislation is enacted, implementation falls short. Over the last ten years, we have not seen enough improvement in the overall criminal justice response to trafficking.

Between 2010 and 2012, some forty per cent of countries reported less than ten convictions per year. Some fifteen per cent did not record a single conviction.

Criminal migrant smugglers are similarly able to operate with impunity.

Governments need to do more to ensure ratification and effective implementation of the Protocols at the national level, and commit the necessary resources, including by supporting other countries to respond to these crimes.

In order to help meet these challenges, UNODC provides assistance on the ground through our country, regional and global programmes, and our network of field offices.



**UNODC**

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

In response to the crisis in the Mediterranean, we have developed a comprehensive strategy to counter migrant smuggling through strategic and integrated action, encompassing:

- research and analysis;
- national capacity building;
- regional and inter-regional cooperation, including through new mechanisms for information sharing;
- global coordination;
- and enhanced protection measures.

We have also produced technical resources to support practitioners.

This includes a new paper on the key concept of exploitation in the trafficking protocol, to assist criminal justice officers in penal proceedings.

At the recent Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Doha, we also launched, in partnership with the IFRC, an action framework for legislators, policy makers and criminal justice practitioners on combating violence against migrants.

Finally, I would like to mention the UN Voluntary Trust Fund, which channels humanitarian, legal and financial aid to trafficking victims through NGO partners.

The Fund is now in its second grant cycle, and I urge you to support its vital work.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are dealing with incredibly complex problems, with no simple solutions.

But this should not discourage us. We must act, engaging the whole of the international community – countries of origin, transit and destination, based on the principle of shared responsibility.

The Alliance, by bringing together diverse partners, including national authorities as well as international, regional and non-governmental organizations, can help to promote the cooperative and comprehensive responses we need.

**Thank you.**