

## **Regional Seminar on “Moving Forward in Addressing Migration-related Crimes in South-Eastern Europe”**

19-20 September, 2017

*Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina*

### **CONCEPT PAPER**

### **ANNOTATED AGENDA**

#### **Background**

Over the past few years, the flow of migrants, originating especially from the Middle East and North Africa, has been a challenge for European States, in particular for Southern European countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. The EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016, which includes main action points to end irregular migration from Turkey to the EU, brought migration flows through the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Balkan route to a relative standstill. This statement established a policy of sending all migrants entering the Greek islands from Turkey back to Turkey. Furthermore, it established that for every Syrian national returned from the Greek islands to Turkey another would be resettled to the EU directly.

In conjunction with the policy decisions of March 2016, the European Union plays an indispensable role in the relocation of migrants from one member state to another, providing emergency assistance to many Southern European states. In the first five months of 2017, 10,300 people have been relocated which adds up to more than 20,000 in total since the implementation of this policy started in 2015. However, the European Commission asserts that more effort from the EU Member States is needed to ensure that all eligible people are relocated from one Member State to another in the coming months.<sup>1</sup>

These policy changes induced by the EU-Turkey Statement brought a particular relief to Greece, where the number of arrivals in the observed period of time decreased by 97% from 152,617 to 4,407. In the first three months of 2017, a total amount of 30,465 migrants arrived

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission. Report from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council. Thirteenth Report on Relocation and Resettlement. 13 June 2017.

in Europe, which is a drastic decrease in comparison with 175,056 arrivals in the same period in 2016.<sup>2</sup> Since migration flows across land and sea are extremely adaptable and fluid, they will shift when obstacles occur. Italy, on the other hand, witnessed an increase in the numbers of arrivals. In the first quarter of 2017, arrivals added up to 24,292 people, whereas in the same period of 2016 it was only 18,777. Around 90% of the migrants arriving in Italy departed from the Libyan coast.<sup>3</sup>

In order to combat migration-related crimes, such as migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, the European Council's decision from 2015 on establishing a resettlement scheme is pivotal. In order to avoid displaced persons in need of international protection having to resort to the criminal networks of smugglers and traffickers, the resettlement scheme provides legal and safe pathways to enter the EU from a third country. From the 22,504 resettlements that the EU Member States agreed to in July 2015, 16,419 people had already been resettled in 21 EU Member States by 9 June 2017.<sup>4</sup>

Inevitably, traffickers and smugglers take advantage of the vulnerabilities that stem from displacement. Motivated by conflict and insecurity as well as by socio-economic hardship, thousands of individuals and families turn to illegal means to migrate in an effort to find a safe haven and better living conditions in Europe.<sup>5</sup> According to the joint Interpol-Europol report on migrant smuggling networks from May 2016, more than 90% of the migrants coming to the EU have used facilitators and members of criminal networks to do so. This report highlights the concern that these numbers are expected rise in the future in response to control measures taken by countries along the migration routes.<sup>6</sup> As a result of the migration crisis in 2015-2016, an estimated \$2.7-4.7 billion in revenue was gathered through smuggling services provided by criminal organizations.<sup>7</sup>

The results of the IOM Flow Monitoring Survey of April 2017 show that 72% of the interviewed migrants traveling through the Central and Eastern Mediterranean route and Western Balkan routes to Europe had suffered physical violence during their journey, and 76% had experienced treatment related to trafficking in human beings or another exploitative practice. The same report found that on the Eastern Mediterranean route, only 10% had experienced this. In general, more migrating women than men were subjected to these types of experiences.<sup>8</sup>

Considering the gravity and the permanence of the situation, the responsibility placed on countries of origin, transit and destination is immense and entails a substantially pressing obligation to react not only to human rights violations and security challenges, but also to criminal organizations making large profits from migrants' and refugees' vulnerable situation. It is within this glaring need for assistance that in October 2014, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Transnational Threats Department of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section of the Organized Crime and Illicit Trafficking Branch of the United

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<sup>2</sup> IOM: Migration Flows to Europe - 2017. Quarterly Overview - March. April 2017.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> UNODC. Global Report on Trafficking in Persons. 2016

<sup>6</sup> Joint Europol Interpol Report, May 2016, Migrant Smuggling Networks: Executive Summary

<sup>7</sup> European Migrant Smuggling Center. Activity Report First Year. Jan 2016-Jan 2017,

<sup>8</sup> IOM. Analysis: Flow Monitoring Surveys the Human Trafficking and other Exploitative Practices Prevalence Indication Survey April 2017

Nation Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) signed the Statement of Support reaffirming their joint commitment towards a continued partnership in the area of countering transnational organized crime, especially smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings.

This co-operation constitutes the follow-up to and builds on the results of the project on “Strengthening Co-operation among Countries of Origin, Transit and Destination in Combating Irregular Migration and Related Transnational Organized Crimes”, which has successfully been implemented by the IOM, OSCE and UNODC since 2014, and which has produced key findings and outcomes for future activities. An integral part of the seminar planned for 2017 is the follow-up to the workshop, organized by the three organizations on “Enhancing and Strengthening International and Cross-border Co-operation in Addressing Irregular Migration” in Podgorica in August 2016. The key findings and outcomes of this workshop highlighted the need for a future seminar which would offer theoretical as well as practical training to law enforcement officers, thereby constituting the basis of the forthcoming seminar.

### **Structure of the seminar**

The seminar aims at strengthening co-operation between criminal justice authorities and relevant public and private actors in order to address irregular migration-related crimes in South-Eastern Europe, with a particular focus on prevention, prosecution, international and cross-border co-operation and assistance to victims. The objective of this seminar will be to identify gaps, challenges and good practices, as well as to strengthen information sharing networks between countries of origin, transit and destination using a multidisciplinary approach, paying also attention to the issue of vulnerability of migrants.

The target audience of this meeting are senior experts and practitioners from relevant bodies of the criminal justice systems (judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, police liaison officers), central authorities and non-governmental organizations dealing with migration and cases of trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants from participating States and Partners for Co-operation, as well as from OSCE field operations and relevant international organizations.

The discussions are intended to result in concrete proposals for enhanced international and cross-border co-operation concerning irregular migration-related crimes in South-Eastern Europe, involving criminal justice and migration practitioners, as well as other relevant stakeholders from the public and private sector. A set of main findings and outcomes will be compiled at the end of the seminar, which will serve as a guiding instrument for States and regional organizations to continue discussions on this topic.

The event will be held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The working language of the workshop will be English, with translation to Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (BCS).