

Opening Remarks
Aldo Lale-Demoz - UNODC Deputy Executive Director
“Safe Harbor Turkey” Exhibition (Vienna International Centre)
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H.E. Ms. Birnur Fertegligil,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of UNODC, let me begin by congratulating the government of Turkey for organizing the exhibition “Safe Harbour Turkey”, and to extend to all of you the best wishes of our Executive Director, Mr. Yuri Fedotov.

We believe the Turkish government and people deserve recognition and praise for their great efforts to proactively address the serious challenges arising from the refugee situation on its soil. In concrete terms, Turkey provides safe harbor to a great number of refugees and other vulnerable migrants fleeing armed conflict in the region.

To understand the full dimension of these efforts, let us bear in mind that according to the UN High Commission for Refugees, this year alone the number of refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey is expected to rise to nearly 1.9 million people, of which 1.7 million Syrian refugees.

Given its geographic location, along the so-called *Eastern Mediterranean migration route*, Turkey plays a key role in responding to the complex needs of refugees and vulnerable migrants. In close cooperation with UNODC and neighboring States, in fact, Turkey ensures that its response to the irregular movement of migrants and to transnational organized crime is balanced with a human rights-based approach.

We know that refugees and vulnerable migrants, in exchange for cash, are often lured by smugglers into perilous journeys that could further increase their trauma and desperation, or even be fatal. We are also aware that these irregular migrants are particularly vulnerable to crimes such as kidnapping, extortion, forced labor, sexual exploitation and physical assault.

We are deeply concerned that among this migrant population, there are women and children, often *unaccompanied* children. They have special needs and thus require special attention.

Precisely for these reasons, I would like to thank the Permanent Representative of Turkey, Her Excellency Ms. Birnur Fertekligil, for bringing to public attention the nature, scope and consequences of the highly complex and large-scale refugee and migrant situation assumed by Turkey.

I also take this opportunity to thank Turkey for being the driving force behind a Crime Commission resolution passed in 2012, later adopted by the UN General Assembly (A/RES/67/185) on *"Promoting efforts to eliminate violence against migrants, migrant workers and their families"* and for being such a reliable partner and donor to the international community in addressing smuggling of migrants.

Turkey is also the current chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, and is closely associated with UNODC in South Eastern Europe. Turkey's cooperation in the Balkans is acknowledged by both UNODC and other external stakeholders.

In South Eastern Europe, it is Turkey that seizes the highest quantity of drugs. According to UNODC research, heroin seizures in 2014 reached 13.3 tons, up 85% from 2011, and one of the highest record worldwide.

Turkey also is a main contributor to international law enforcement networking efforts aimed at confronting illicit drugs and crime, as well as an active participant in the UNODC-led *Paris Pact Initiative* - an international coalition of over 70 countries united against the illicit production, trafficking and abuse of opiates.

Finally, the *Turkish International Academy Against Drugs and Organized Crime* (TADOC), in Ankara, provides training opportunities for public safety servants from many countries in the Balkans and Central Asia.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We cannot stand idle as desperate people fall prey to international organized crime whilst trying to escape conflict and humanitarian disasters. We need urgent and resolute international action to save lives, assist victims, as well as to investigate, prosecute and sentence the perpetrators of criminal activities.

Together with other organizations, such as UNHCR, IOM and the OSCE, we are calling for concerted action to address the loss of lives, injury, trauma and serious human rights violations affecting migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees traveling through the Eastern Mediterranean route.

The *UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol on Migrant Smuggling* provides for a sound international legal framework to combat this crime and to protect migrants' rights.

In fact, as of today, 185 States are party to the Convention and 141 States are party to the Migrants Smuggling Protocol. However, for the legal framework to become truly useful, we all need to work harder at its effective implementation.

To begin, States Parties have the obligation to respect the internationally-accepted definition of migrant smuggling, and to criminalize migrant smuggling. States should furthermore ensure that their criminal justice responses specifically target organized crime groups.

Consistent implementation of the *Migrant Smuggling Protocol* by States is crucial to provide a legal basis for cross-border cooperation, both informal and formal, among countries of origin, transit and destination.

An effective response to the current situation also requires strengthening the capacity of front line officers, investigators and magistrates so they can carry out their duties effectively. Equally important, States and civil society organizations must devote resources and provide protective services to victims.

As the guardian of the Convention and Protocol, UNODC provides technical assistance and supports the international community in developing comprehensive strategies that encompass prevention, prosecution and protection.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There are no simple solutions to this crisis. We all depend on long-term, continuous and comprehensive efforts, sustained by adequate resources.

UNODC remains committed to continuing its partnership with Turkey and other actors present here today, in order to ensure that our collective responses to curb refugee and migration crises are as effective as possible.

Thank you.
