

UNODC "Migrant Smuggling: #DeadlyBusiness"

I. Background

Worldwide the smuggling of migrants is an increasingly complex and dynamic crime. It produces billions of dollars for the organized crime groups who operate networks that cross continents by land, sea or air. Every day, around the world, women, men and children risk their lives to escape poverty, lack of employment opportunities, wars, persecution or natural disasters. They leave their countries putting their lives in the hands of smugglers.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as guardian of the *Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air*, is mandated to assist the State Parties in the implementation of the international instrument. UNODC's assistance takes into consideration that the smuggling of migrants can endanger the lives or security of the migrants involved, and that it is necessary to provide a humane treatment to migrants by fully protecting their human rights.

Article 15 of the Protocol refers to those measures to be taken or strengthened by the States in order to "increase public awareness of the fact that migrant smuggling is a criminal activity frequently perpetrated by organized criminal groups for profit and that it poses serious risks to the migrants concerned". It also calls State Parties to cooperate "in the field of public information in order to prevent potential migrants from becoming victims of organized criminal groups."

II. Justification

According to the UNODC report "The Globalization of Crime" the annual market volume of smuggling of migrants in the Mexican border into the United States represented an income of \$ 6.6 billion dollars for the organized crime recording about 3 million entries in that same year (2010).¹

The 11 countries of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) -as well as its 5 observers- belong to an area with high migratory flows and can be identified either as countries of origin, transit, destination or return of migrants. In addition to the traditional interregional migratory movements, the region has been facing the presence of migrants that come from African or Asian countries that arrive to the Americas through a combination of means of transportation either by land, sea or air.

The hundreds of migrants who move daily through this area are generally in situations of vulnerability and often pay for the irregular crossing of borders. Smugglers can be people with a close relationship with the migrants or highly sophisticated transnational networks operating in a variety of countries and offering a wide range of services. Thus, smuggling of migrants is linked to counterfeiting, money laundering, corruption and other crimes.

¹ https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta/TOCTA_Report_2010_low_res.pdf



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

With this context in mind, UNODC's Liaison and Partnership Office in Mexico launched an awareness raising campaign entitled "[Smuggling of migrants: #DeadlyBusiness](#)". The campaign is focused on drawing the attention of authorities and the media to this violent business that ultimately supports a range of other forms of organized crime. It also serves as a mechanism to warn vulnerable migrants and inform them of the risks of using a smuggler. Through a range of products, including posters, videos, a toolkit, infographics and radio spots, the campaign illustrates each of the smuggling methods used by criminals, covering land, sea and air.

The campaign is the product of a participatory dialogue between Governmental officials, civil society representatives, academia, journalists and migrant shelters from Mexico and Central America who took part in a series of roundtables and focus groups.

III. Objectives of the campaign

Main objectives:

- Create awareness among authorities and the media that migrant smuggling is a business that funds the organized crime and violates human rights;
- Build public warning mechanisms to reduce the vulnerability of migrants and inform them on the risks of using a smuggler (land, sea and air).

Secondary objectives:

- Inform the general public and generate knowledge about migrant smuggling;
- Create a dialogue among the media, the authorities, the civil society and the academia;
- Promote partnerships and coordinate efforts to tackle the crime effectively and protect the rights of migrants;
- Demonstrate coordinated and integrated efforts of the States Parties to the Palermo Protocol against the smuggling of migrants.

IV. Proposal

UNODC offers the adoption of the campaign "Migrant Smuggling: #DeadlyBusiness" by the Regional Conference on Migration with the aim to reach audiences in the countries of origin, transit and destination of migrants. Proposal:

- Sending of a formal letter to UNODC -either through the Technical Secretariat of the RCM or by each country individually that decides to adopt and endorse the campaign-. The letter should express the formal interest of the country as well as the lead government institution for this purpose.
- UNODC offers the communication tools developed which are all available in Spanish (#NegocioMortal) and English (#DeadlyBusiness) -except for the radio spots-. For distribution in consulates outside the RCM area, materials are also available in Arabic, French and Portuguese.
- UNODC can make alterations to the materials to include the logos of the government institutions as required. It could also be possible to develop new communication tools if agreed with the host country.



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

- UNODC and the host country would coordinate the organization of a launching event involving high level authorities, media, UNODC officials and special guests.²

V. Added value

- The RCM positioned as a regional actor implementing concrete actions to prevent and combat the smuggling of migrants;
- Strengthening of a strategic alliance between an international organization, a regional inter-government forum and Member States of the United Nations as part of a global information initiative to raise awareness and produce information on the smuggling of migrants;
- Concrete implementation of one of the articles of the *Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air* (Article 15);
- Political and institutional positioning of the topic as a priority on the national and regional agendas;
- Media impact of the actions carried out by the States in the prevention and combat of the smuggling of migrants;
- Promotion of a debate within the government, civil society, international organizations, universities, and the media on this topic;
- Distribution of information among potential migrants on the circle of violence generated by the smuggling of migrants.

For more information on the #DeadlyBusiness campaign please contact Mariana Alegret Cendejas, International Cooperation Regional Officer (mariana.alegret@unodc.org).

² The costs of the event and its organization should be assumed by each country.