



**UNODC**

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Regional Centre for  
East Asia and the Pacific

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# **Signing Ceremony on Cambodia's participation in the project "Smuggling of Migrants: Establishment and Operation of a Coordination and Analysis Unit for East Asia and the Pacific"**

**Address by Gary Lewis  
Regional Representative**

**Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

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**Excellency,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all, I would like to thank the Deputy Prime Minister for having organized this signing ceremony.

As stated in the invitations and here on the backdrop: migrant smuggling is deadly business. It's a deadly business that still too often does not receive the adequate attention by politicians and decision-makers around the world. This is why I am very grateful for this signing ceremony because this helps shedding light on something that would need in the spotlight all over the world.

What is migrant smuggling?

Technically speaking and quoting the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, migrant smuggling is “the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.”

Speaking from the perspectives of the those who drive and organize migrant smuggling: the criminals: **it’s a big business, generating huge profits on the back of the migrants’ dreams and hopes** – whatever the motivation is, whatever the factors are that make a person decide take the risk and to head to another country. While the profits are high, the criminals – in particular the organizers who drive the business - face little risks of detection and punishment: **Migrant smuggling is a high-profit low risk crime.** This contributes to attracting criminals.

Migrant smuggling groups in the region have become increasingly professional and networked and now offer a range of services from the highly sophisticated and expensive to the very cheap and life threatening: E.g. some smuggled migrants safely travel by air with the use of genuine documents that have been obtained on fraudulent grounds - while other smuggled migrants suffocate to death in the back of a truck.

Criminal networks prefer methods that minimize their risks - often at the expense of the safety and lives of the smuggled migrants: **migrant smuggling is a deadly business.**

It’s also a business that makes migrants vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking – either during the smuggling process or as a result of it. **Migrant smugglers fuel human trafficking.**

We need to join forces to stop this!

And contributing to this, **UNODC’s focus is on assisting states in developing an effective criminal justice response to human trafficking and migrant smuggling** - through providing training and policy advice, and fostering international law enforcement cooperation.

When addressing migrant smuggling, we need to acknowledge:

- That Law enforcement policies alone cannot solve the problem. They have to be embedded in a wider migration and development policy framework.
- That upholding human rights and protecting the safety and lives of migrants must be pivotal.
- That there is a need to strengthen international cooperation in criminal justice matters.
- And finally, that there is need to better complement border control measures by increasing the focus of law enforcement efforts on investigating and prosecuting migrant smugglers.

**The challenge is to dismantle the smuggling networks and address the conditions in which they can flourish. The challenge is to bring the perpetrators to justice. We need destroy equation of migrant smuggling being high-profit low risk crime.**

The project, we are going to sign, is in line with this.

The project as a already it's name indicates – “Smuggling of Migrants: Establishment and Operation of a Coordination and Analysis Unit (CAU) for East Asia & the Pacific” – aims at improving our understanding of migrant smuggling, based on evidence, through establishing a regional system to collect, analyze, and share data on migrant smuggling methods and flows.

Currently knowledge is scattered and often incomplete. That is why I believe that this project is of utmost importance, and that is also why I am thankful for Australia which finally agreed to fund the project.

Working through a regional approach the project is also designed to foster international cooperation - because to **effectively fight transnational crime the need of the our is knowing the threat, acting operationally, cooperating regionally**.

We need to **cooperate** better across a region and across regions – **because it takes a network to defeat a network**.

And that's why I am so grateful to Cambodia for joining this project, for joining forces to fight a deadly business.

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