



Criminal justice experts and representatives from international organizations gathered in Belgrade today for the two-day OSCE Annual Police Experts Meeting, to discuss new trends related to links between organized crime, irregular migration and trafficking in human beings.

The aim of these discussions is to explore ways to strengthen multi-agency co-operation in fighting trafficking in human beings and migration-related crimes committed by organized criminal groups in the OSCE area.

"The main driver behind the smuggling of irregular migrants and trafficking of people is financial gain. Therefore, all measures should be taken to trace criminal assets and confiscate them," said Serbian State Secretary at the Ministry of Interior Aleksandar Nikolić as he opened the meeting on behalf of the Serbian 2015 OSCE Chairmanship. He reaffirmed Serbia's commitment to the issue and said he looked forward to the Meeting's discussions, sharing of good practices, nurturing of informal links and contribution to international and multi-stakeholder co-operation.

Alexey Lyzhenkov, OSCE Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats, underlined the alarming facts about the criminal business engaged in the smuggling of migrants and trafficking of people.

"Even more serious is the fact that in this case the smuggled and trafficked commodities are vulnerable human beings, often in despair because of a number of reasons, including conflicts, instability and poverty," said Lyzhenkov. "I am confident that this meeting will contribute to identifying recommendations for enhancing law enforcement capabilities in investigating, prosecuting and dismantling organized criminal groups engaged in the smuggling of migrants and trafficking of persons."

The Meeting is co-organized by OSCE's Transnational Threats Department, Strategic Police Matters Unit and the Serbian 2015 OSCE Chairmanship, and brings together experts from OSCE participating States and international organizations.

The main findings and outcomes of the Meeting will serve as guidance for further activities on this topic at the national and regional levels, and support the work of the OSCE when providing technical assistance to participating States and Partners for Co-operation.

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