



STATEMENT OF THE  
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE  
TO THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN VIENNA

**UNODC WG on Smuggling of Migrants**

*14-15 October 2021, Vienna*

Mr. Chair,

Allow me to draw your attention to the worrying question of uncontrolled payments through blockchain platforms and the dangerous role that the unregulated use of cryptocurrencies plays in the smuggling of migrants.

The use of cash payments to avoid transparency in recent years has shifted into the even less transparent world of digital payment and cryptocurrencies. While some online platforms oblige their clients (senders and beneficiaries of remittances) to identify themselves, some cryptocurrency platforms and virtual asset service providers do not request identification from their customers. As is well known, this only increases opportunities for money laundering and similar crimes.

For example, many migrants along the Balkan Route accept the promises of smugglers on the internet and often fall victim to criminal trafficking chains. Social media networks and the so-called “surface” and “dark” web are Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools widely used to facilitate recruitment and transportation in the smuggling of migrants - including on the Balkan Route to other European countries - leading to their subsequent exploitation.

Indeed, technology is a double-edged sword, while it can be used for evil ends, there are also several technological tools, developed by law enforcement authorities, civil society actors and faith-based organizations, that permit people to equip themselves with knowledge about the risks of smuggling and provide means through which to report possible cases of it.

Additionally, my Delegation considers it necessary that both State and non-State actors take appropriate actions to promote the development of secure technological solutions; to introduce mechanisms for the identification of virtual assets, in order

to increase transparency and combat illegal actions within these services; to promote prevention campaigns on smuggling and initiatives to stop migrant smuggling and to make migration more safe, orderly and regular.

To raise awareness of their risks and educate users and beneficiaries in the correct use of virtual assets, awareness campaigns and specific training programs should be promoted - both nationally and internationally - to contribute to the prevention of smuggling and protection of migrants, particularly those in need.

Thank you Mr. Chair.