

Budapest Process

1st Meeting of the Community of Law Enforcement Practitioners

Date: 20 April 2022

Location: Virtual (via Zoom)

Summary

The inaugural meeting of the Community of Law Enforcement Practitioners (COLEP) was held virtually on 20 April 2022. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and endorse the COLEP's terms of reference; objectives and priorities; modalities for cooperation; and way forward.

Officers from the following countries attended this meeting of the COLEP:

Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Hungary, Iran, Iraq, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Serbia, and Turkey.

The meeting was opened by the Head of the of the Budapest Process Secretariat. Following the opening, three presentations were delivered by representatives of Austria, UNODC, and ICMPD, respectively.

Main Points of Discussion

- During the meeting it was agreed that COLEP is a timely and much needed initiative and that it was critical for countries along the route to get on the same page in regards to countering smuggling of migrants (SOM) and trafficking in human beings (THB).
- The adverse impact of the situation in Afghanistan was outlined. The need to address irregular migration from Afghanistan to neighbouring countries and along the routes was made clear, as increasing use of irregular migration channels was leading to occurrence of more SOM and THB.
- The more effective unitisation of the – *Task Force for Western Balkans* – was stressed as this was an effective cooperation platform among the countries of the region and with other European countries and could be used for better liaison with countries along the Silk Routes.
- Several countries in the Silk Routes region have established robust legal and policy frameworks to prevent and combat SOM and THB, indeed actions are already being taken against criminal groups and networks, however, international cooperation would help expand and reinforce these efforts.
- It was important to continue interventions such as:
 - Training and capacity building of law enforcement officers (especially female) to better respond to SOM and THB, including establishing of curricula and Training of Trainer programmes
 - Development of SOPs to improve institutional effectiveness and coordination as well as enhance intra- and international collaboration capacities

- Sharing best practices; latest trends and statistics; information on criminal groups and networks; prosecution and investigation techniques (including addressing illicit financial flows); technology for forensics and data analysis.
- The Terms of Reference of COLEP was endorsed by the participants, by and large, with the observation that study visits should be minimised in favour of other collaboration methods (find attached)
- COLEP is an informal platform where participation is non-binding and voluntary but the platform will be structured such that its meetings are arranged on a regular basis. Thus, COLEP will essentially serve the function of a 'market place' where law enforcement officials can come together to seek solutions from their peers for their most pressing needs, especially in regards to regional cooperation against SOM and THB, thereby enabling a win-win framework of interaction.

Follow up points

- The 2nd meeting of COLEP will be held in-person in North Macedonia in May to follow up on the discussion and start setting the stage for cooperation opportunities to emerge. Details of the meeting will be shared by the Budapest Process Secretariat
- The purpose of the second meeting will be for participants to:
 - Get to know each other better (why are you a part of COLEP? What are your expectations from COLEP? What would you like to know from your fellow participants?)
 - Present a *Country Reporting Profile* (find attached description)
 - Discuss needs and opportunities for law enforcement collaboration
 - Decide who will be the rotational chairs of COLEP (Bulgaria has already volunteered to be one; is there a Silk Routes country that would like to volunteer?)