



# IOM co-organizes an international conference in Tunisia to combat Human Trafficking

**15-16 April 2014** – IOM in collaboration with the Council of Europe and the Tunisian Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Transitional Justice organized an international conference in Tunis entitled *The fight against Human Trafficking: A multi-faceted response to a complex phenomenon.*

The innovative and timely conference on counter trafficking brought together experts from Algeria, Morocco, Lebanon, Serbia, Côte d'Ivoire, Switzerland and government officials from Belgium. Various international organizations and local NGOs also attended the conference. Representatives from the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) were also present and provided the audience with information on European best practices on counter-trafficking. The Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE) also participated.

The conference provided a rich forum to enhance dialogue and discussion among participants in addition to facilitating the exchange of best practice and experiences in counter trafficking across the region. A total of 150 governmental and civil society representatives as well as national media and academics attended the two day conference, which enabled participants to deepen their knowledge of international anti-trafficking standards, including the 2008 Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Participants also had the opportunity to propose measures to be implemented in the different countries of the region, including Tunisia.

In his opening speech, Mr. Hafeedh Ben Salah the Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Transitional Justice highlighted that "For Tunisians, human trafficking is a crime against humanity, especially when it is committed against children and vulnerable groups". He also added that the political transition in Tunisia presents an opportunity to build capacity to combat this crime, with the support and cooperation of international organizations like IOM.

IOM Tunisia Chief of Mission, Ms. Lorena Lando, reaffirmed there is not a quick or easy solution to strengthen our ability to



identify and protect victims of trafficking, but a greater commitment from all partners across borders to protect all migrants – regardless of their legal status – may well be a precondition. By land, sea or air, migrants keep trying very perilous routes to reach Europe, despite the well-known risks of mishap, abuse, and death. Indeed, pushed by economic hardship and insecurity, these flows look set to increase in the coming months as weather conditions at sea improve. IOM's Regional Migrant Assistance Specialist, Ms. Sarah Craggs, reaffirmed IOM's support to address complex flows and protect migrants on the move in the region through the recently established inter-agency Migration Task Force for the North-Eastern African Migratory Route and North Africa ([MTF-NOAH](#)).

Countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean that were traditionally countries of origin of migration are now facing challenges as countries of transit and destination. According to the "*Baseline Study on trafficking in persons*" pub-

lished by IOM in 2013, Tunisia is a country of origin, transit and destination for victims of trafficking, into forced prostitution, forced labour and domestic work. These victims include men, women and children.

Significant coordinated efforts have been made at the international, regional and national levels to respond to the challenges of complex flows in the region, including the need to combat human trafficking and ensure the protection of victims of trafficking and other vulnerable migrants. This is also the case in Tunisia, where the National Commission against Trafficking in Tunisia, with the support of JTIP-funded SHARE Project (2011-2013) has drafted a comprehensive Anti-trafficking Law in response to the escalating problem. It is expected that this legislation is to be enacted during 2014.

The conference proceedings and recommendations will be soon made available via IOM's website.

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