



YLVA JOHANSSON

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HOME AFFAIRS

Rue de la Loi, 200 B-1049 Brussels

Tel. +32-2 295 01 70

cab-johansson-contact@ec.europa.eu

Brussels

Dear Minister,

The **International Conference on a Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling** that took place in Brussels on 28 November 2023 successfully brought together all 27 EU Member States, 35 partner countries, the European Parliament, seven EU Agencies and five international organisations. It was an important landmark to demonstrate our firm commitment to reinforce our joint action towards tackling this transnational crime more decisively. Smugglers are responsible for over 90 percent of irregular migrants who reach EU territory and far too often risk innocent people's lives on treacherous roads and at sea. Fighting this common challenge requires our joint resolute action.

Thus far, over 70 partners have expressed their commitment to the Global Alliance which continues to evolve as a dynamic cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as key international organisations and the private sector. During the International Conference, participants agreed on the crucial need to work along the main migration routes following three strands of actions: prevention, response to migrant smuggling and alternatives to irregular migration as a key deterrent for smuggling. The European Commission is actively driving concrete initiatives and action on each of the three strands.

In particular, on **prevention**, we encourage you to take part of the upcoming United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Working Group on Migrant Smuggling in July 2024, promoting the implementation of the UN Protocol on Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air globally. The Commission intends to hold a thematic meeting on the Toolbox for transport operators in the third quarter of 2024, bringing together experts from public and private sectors to strengthen our cooperation. On **response**, we notably plan to launch a dedicated work strand on digital smuggling in cooperation with Europol and partners, including private sectors, in the spring of 2024.

Lauri Läänemets, Minister of Interior, Estonia

In order to provide **alternatives** to irregular migration, a series of roundtable meetings on legal pathways are planned, with the first involving Bangladesh on 5 March 2024 and others to follow on a rolling basis in the course of the year. I count on your active engagement and participation in all these different but complimentary strands of action. A more detailed timetable with milestone initiatives, including the next addition of the high-level International Conference in November, follows in the Annex.

To achieve our objectives and build on our operational cooperation to enhance our effectiveness in dismantling smuggling networks, I count on your commitment and invite you to express interest in the different strands of work. I invite you to nominate a person of contact at the right level and communicate the relevant details to us. On the Commission's side, we have put in place a functional mailbox for all correspondence at:

HOME-GLOBAL-ALLIANCE@ec.europa.eu.

Finally, I would like to use the occasion of this letter to stress the importance of upgrading the EU's legal framework on anti-smuggling which is older than 20 years. Adopted on the day of the Conference, the legislative proposals are an important building block of our comprehensive action to fight against migrant smuggling. We aim to provide a reinforced criminal law framework to strengthen and harmonise penalties that take account of the seriousness of the offence, improve jurisdictional reach, and altogether reinforce Member States' resources and available data on this serious crime. Moreover, Europol will become a true centre of gravity for combating the organised crime of migrant smuggling in Europe by ensuring additional resources and better exchange of information. Putting our house in order is crucial to send a strong message to smugglers that we are serious about fighting this crime. Therefore, it is crucial that these proposals are adopted swiftly by the Council and the Parliament. I count on your support to ensure that general approaches can be reached on both proposals as soon as possible. I look forward to our debate on this in the Justice and Home Affairs Council of 4-5 March 2024.

As a criminal activity that disrespects human life in the pursuit of significant material profit, migrant smuggling is truly a global challenge to be addressed with global action. The Commission will not spare its efforts in putting forward concrete initiatives and facilitating our collective work. I equally count on your full commitment and involvement towards an assertive and collective response.

Yours sincerely,



Ylva Johansson