



Check against delivery

«Launch event of new training materials on Human Rights at International Borders»

**25 October 2021
16:00 – 17:30 CET
Online**

Opening Remarks

Ms, Christine Löw, Deputy Head of the Peace and Human Rights Division of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear High Commissioner, Dear Under-Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

- A warm welcome to all of you. Thank you for joining us today for the launch of the new training materials on Human Rights at International Borders developed by OHCHR and UNOCT.
- Human rights violations at borders are reported across all regions and frequently. We have all repeatedly seen reports that are deeply alarming. We know the reported cases are just the tip of the iceberg.
- The protection of its borders is closely linked to a State's national security concerns. Border governance is therefore a highly sensitive area where States tend to be defensive towards any scrutiny from the outside.

- Improving the respect of human rights at international borders is both highly relevant and challenging. What do we need to do to better protect human rights at international borders?
- We need to ensure that legislation, standard operating procedures, monitoring mechanisms and complaint procedures are founded in the respect of human rights. It is also of the utmost importance that individuals working in border security and management receive solid human rights training.
- Border governance must always comply with international law, in particular human rights, humanitarian and refugee law. This is clear. But what does this mean in practice?
- What has to be done concretely to protect human rights in various border procedures? Reception, immediate assistance, screening, interviewing, detention, return? How do you identify migrants that are particularly likely to face vulnerable situations? How do you identify who needs protection? Which human rights are particularly at risk at borders? Why and how?
- This guide provides answers and practical training recommendations.
- We particularly commend the authors on the attention to gender responsiveness throughout the trainers guide. All too often – particularly in areas linked to national security – gender responsiveness is just an afterthought. This is not acceptable.

Gender responsiveness must be an integral part to border governance. We are therefore very pleased that the trainers guide provides extensive guidance on improving gender responsiveness in border management.

- Translating human rights obligations in everyday work situations is not always easy and not always evident. The trainers guide developed by OHCHR and UNOCT bridges this gap. It offers a valuable tool for border authorities to improve the respect of human rights throughout their operations.
- Having been a strong advocate for human rights throughout my career, I would also like to add a comment on the role of the human rights community: It is crucial that the human rights community holds *all actors* involved in border governance to account. But I would also like to note that the majority of us – who advocate for the respect of human rights – have never been responsible for protecting a border or managing immigration. Let alone have we had to do this in a volatile, high-pressure situation. In that sense, I believe that this trainers guide not only serves to better educate border officials; it is also a valuable insight for human rights defenders into the complexity of border management. Such an understanding will help to advocate for the respect of human rights at borders with more precision and more effectively.

- To improve the respect of human rights at international borders, we need to tackle the challenges from all angles and with all relevant actors. This is the logic that Switzerland follows in building its human rights at international borders portfolio. We support international organisations, border authorities and civil society to do their part in improving the respect of human rights at international borders. Finally, we are also looking towards the future by supporting a study on human rights implications in the use of artificial intelligence in border management.
- Let me conclude by congratulating OHCHR and UNOCT on the launch of this trainers guide. We thank you for your hard work and we appeal to all actors involved with border management to draw on this guide and work on better protecting human rights at international borders.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to hear from our panelists and fellow co-hosts.