Title: An update and Italian perspective on legal issues arising from refugee migration, rescue and loss at sea

ABSTRACT:

A massive migration flow towards Europe is taking place, through both land and sea route. The Central Mediterranean Route has become the main pathway into Europe. In 2016 about 180,000 migrants used it.

The nature of the migration flows is mixed, including economic migrants as well as persons in need of international protection, fleeing from armed conflicts or countries where they fear to be persecuted on grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or where violations of human rights occur. They are usually seeking for the status of refugees.

Migrants’ journeys are organized by exploitative migrant smuggling and human trafficking networks.

Italy is directly involved in handling such phenomenon, both individually and within the framework of international organizations. In particular, it is currently leading an EU military operation, EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA, which is finalised at disrupting the migrant smuggling and human trafficking business model.

In such framework, some naval units are also involved in search and rescue (SAR) activities in the Central Mediterranean sea. SAR activities are deployed by other actors too, both governmental and nongovernmental (NGOs).

The session aims to give an overview of the activities conducted in the Mediterranean in relation to the ongoing migration flow and the related legal issues.