

## VOICE Spring Event

### The Mediterranean Sea: a neglected humanitarian crisis?

**Wednesday 19 June 2024**

*Mundo Madou, Av. des Arts 7/8, 1210 Brussels*

*17:45 – 20:00 (followed by a networking moment until 21:00)*

VOICE is delighted to invite you to our Spring Event, with an inspiring lineup of speakers:

#### Opening remarks

- **Sergio Cecchini**, Humanitarian Representation to the EU and NATO of Médecins Sans Frontières

#### Panellists

- **Sophie Beau**, Co-founder and General Director of SOS MEDITERRANEE
- **Giuseppe Caccia**, Founder of Mediterranea Saving Humans
- **Vincent Cochetel**, Special Envoy for the Western & Central Mediterranean situation of UNHCR
- **Helena Ranchal**, Director of International Operations of Médecins du Monde France

#### Closing remarks

- **Dominic Crowley**, VOICE President

#### Moderator

**Maria Groenewald**, VOICE Director

## Background

2023 was the deadliest year on record for migrants. Nearly [60 per cent](#) of deaths were linked to drowning. The Mediterranean crossing continues to be [the deadliest route](#) for migrants, with at least 3,129 deaths and disappearances in 2023. This is the highest death toll recorded in the Mediterranean since 2017. This situation has led a variety of civil society organisations to define the Mediterranean Sea not only as the cemetery of Europe, but also as a [crime scene](#), where international law is violated and life-saving activities are often [obstructed](#) or [criminalised](#). Search and Rescue (SAR) NGOs play a crucial role in filling the gap left by many states for a proactive SAR mechanism. However, they are often not recognised as humanitarian NGOs, and they are not recipient of institutional funding. In response to this, some humanitarian NGOs have developed partnerships with SAR NGOs, and others [call for an end](#) to the obstruction of civil SAR activities in the Mediterranean. Recognising the urgency in addressing this scenario, humanitarian actors will be brought together on the eve of the [World Refugee Day](#), to discuss this situation at European borders.

## Objectives of the panel debate

- Open the debate on the Mediterranean Sea as a humanitarian space or a migration space, to reflect on roles and responsibilities of a variety of actors;
- Explore the collaboration between SAR NGOs in the Mediterranean Sea and the broader humanitarian sector;
- Reflect on the linkages between the criminalisation of SAR NGOs in the Mediterranean Sea and the lack of institutional funding and recognition.