

**30 MARCH 2021 | 3PM CEST**

# RETHINKING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGAINST ILLICIT TRAFFICKING IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

## Concept

The COVID-19 pandemic has been affecting illicit trade and smuggling activities since its inception, imposing unprecedented limits on criminal organizations and cartels but also providing them with novel and unexpected opportunities to expand their multiple businesses and further infiltrate the legal economy according to new demands, especially in pharmaceuticals, medical and personal protective equipment, and test kits. In this context, illicit trafficking remains an important phenomenon in Europe and the broader Mediterranean, including both new and more ordinary goods such as tobacco, weapons and narcotics. At the same time, as typical illicit trade's channels and structures suffered extended disruption, organised crime groups reacted quickly to rethink their logistics and distribution activities by exploiting the great potential of e-commerce and online marketplaces, likely enlarging their customers and partners' networks on a global scale. Given the international implications of this booming threat, a highly cooperative and integrated approach involving multiple stakeholders and encompassing as many sectors as possible is necessary. This includes not only deeper cooperation between law-enforcement agencies, but also stronger diplomatic and institutional-level engagement between countries, shared regulations, as well as a concrete alliance within the region's private sector, with an eye to including the civil society and raising awareness in the broader public.

## Agenda

### OPENING REMARK

**BENEDETTO DELLA VEDOVA**, Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

### SESSION I (50 min)

#### **AFTER COVID-19: FILLING THE GAP IN THE REGIONAL STRATEGY AGAINST ILLICIT TRAFFICKING**

Regional (and global) illicit trafficking continues to evolve and now encompasses a broad variety of products, activities, routes and actors. Because of the pandemic, the shift to e-commerce has been accelerated and criminals are taking advantage of changes in consumer demands, exploiting societal vulnerabilities and targeting exposed communities. In the broader Mediterranean region, including the Balkans and the Maghreb, alternative smuggling routes have already arisen, while criminal cartels such as the Italian Mafias have exploited the economic distress caused by the virus to further infiltrate the licit economy and cement their influence by providing services to local populations. Against this backdrop, governments and law enforcement agencies are struggling to adapt and tackle these threats in a context of unprecedented social and economic constraints. As a result, current countermeasures should be reframed and strengthened in order to be successful. In this vein, a holistic approach involving as many stakeholders as possible, including governments, the private sector and corporations as well as NGOs and academia, is key to deploy effective solutions and achieve long-lasting results.

- What are the main vulnerabilities of Mediterranean countries in the wake of the pandemic?
- What is the status of illicit trafficking in the Mediterranean region? What about Italy and the EU?
- How is the massive shift towards digital channels redefining the illicit trafficking phenomenon?
- Are there best-practices that can inform and inspire our efforts?

### Kick off Speakers

**ALFREDO NUNZI**, Head of Institutional & Legal Affairs Department, Europol

**TUESDAY REITANO**, Deputy Director, The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime

**LUIS GABRIEL MORENO-OCAMPO**, Visiting Professor, USC School of Cinematic Arts and Member of the PMI IMPACT Expert Council.

*Moderated by*

**PIOTR STRYSZOWSKI**, Senior Economist and Chair, Task Force on Countering Illicit Trade, OECD

**OPEN DEBATE** (30 min)

### SESSION II (50 min)

## MULTILATERALISM IS THE WAY: HOW TO ENHANCE AND EXPAND THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL PROTOCOLS AGAINST ILLICIT TRAFFICKING

Different types of illicit markets and activities require tailored solutions, but their increasing interconnectedness also suggests the need for a multidimensional approach that can effectively combine and integrate multiple tools without losing sight of its final goal. As the fight against the pandemic itself demonstrates, unilateral initiatives have proven less effective or insufficient to curb threats that know no borders. This means promoting better and deeper coordination among states but also readapting the very methods and scopes of this fight by thinking in the same way as criminal syndicates think. In this context, international treaties and regulations, such as the Protocol to Eliminate the Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products (FCTC) or the UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, represent the best foundations for building shared and coordinated responses to globalized threats.

- What are the main challenges related to framing and implementing multilateral solutions?
- How to ensure the practicability and effectiveness of international protocols in light of fluid and changing threats?
- How to ensure the ratification and application of international protocols by member countries, including Italy?

### Kick off Speakers

**ARNALDO MINUTI**, Chief of Office VII, International Cooperation against global threats, DG for Security and Political Affairs, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

**ENRICO MARTINO**, Central Director, International Relations and Projects, Agency of Customs and Monopolies, Italy

**ERNESTO SAVONA**, Director of Transcrime, (Joint Research Centre on Transnational Crime), Professor of Criminology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan

*Moderated by*

**FILIPPO MUSCA**, Director General, Siracusa International Institute for Criminal Justice and Human Rights

**OPEN DEBATE** (30 min)

## **List of participants**

### Italian Institutions

**SANDRA ZAMPA**, Advisor for International Relations and Institutional Activities Communication, Italian Ministry of Health (*tbc*)

**FABIO SOKOLOWICZ**, Diplomatic Advisor, Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance (*tbc*)

### Law Enforcement

**ANGELO LONGO**, Colonel, Guardia di Finanza

**ROBERTO DIEGHI**, Colonel, Antimafia Investigative Directorate (DIA)

### Foreign Countries

**IMEN BAHLOUS**, Colonel Major, Head of International cooperation, Tunisian Customs, Tunisia

### Private Sector

**DIEGO RAITERI**, Director regulatory policy, Illicit trade prevention, Philip Morris International

**PMI REPRESENTATIVES** from Maghreb Division

**STEFANO BETTI**, Deputy Director General, TRACIT

**MARK WILLIAMS**, Research Analyst, Organised Crime and Policing Team, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)

**DOMINIQUE LAPPRAND**, General Secretary, Association Combating Illicit Trade (ALCCI)

### Academia

**UGLJEŠA UGI ZVEKIC**, Senior Advisor, Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, Adjunct Professor, LUISS, Roma Tre University

**MAHMUT CENGIZ**, Faculty member at the Schar School of Policy and Government and research Scholar at Terrorism, Transnational Crime, and Corruption Center (TraCCC) of GMU.

**SIMONA MELORIO**, Lecturer, University of Molise

**MARA MIGNONE**, Research Coordinator, RiSSC- Research Centre on Security and Crime