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A global network or platform to fight illicit trade

Illicit trade is the highest expression of transnational organized crime. It is the criminal and dark side of globalization to which the international community has never found a proper response, and one of the reasons lies upon the multifaceted nature of illicit trade, which reunites many different forms of trafficking. Drug trafficking, arms smuggling, human trafficking, migrants smuggling, counterfeiting and contraband, all fall under the general idea of illicit trade. Governments and the international community as a whole usually focused their attention only on some of these criminal activities and did not elaborate a strategy to address the problem as a whole. If for some forms of illicit trade, as drug or arms trafficking, there has always been the perception of how dangerous they are, for others, like counterfeiting, this has not been the case. The example of counterfeiting may be very useful to show how the perception of illicit trade should change and be addressed as a global problem. This illicit activity grew undisturbed and is now a huge source of money for organized criminals as well as an excellent method to launder proceeds of crime. The role that counterfeiting plays within the criminal organization structure and the great risks it poses to the health and safety of citizens make it one of the most serious criminal activities that need to be tackled.

It is clear that transnational organized crime manages the entire range of these traffics as a modern multinational enterprise and we must now be ready to plan, support and implement a global response.

However, recognizing that criminal activities like drug trafficking, arms smuggling and counterfeiting are part of the same global problem could not be enough, as illicit trade has a great impact also on other aspects of our societies. It has a great impact on different issues that are under discussion on the other Councils of the World Economic Forum.

Illicit trade is often linked with corruption, creating an exponential growth of their negative economic impact; it hinders economic growth and development, depriving the developing world of its growth potential and cutting the expected returns from investments in the developed world; it is a barrier for the empowerment of youth and could leave our future generations without hope.

This is the time for experimenting new approaches and validating new solutions.

To support the change of perception of illicit trade and finding innovative solution, the international community and Governments may find very useful the creation of a platform for the global evaluation and analysis of illicit trade, in all its components. The platform could be responsible for assessing and analyzing data, the connections between the various illicit activities at its core; produce reports, and support the new perception of illicit trade. The various international organizations may contribute with their own expertise, supporting the merging and assessment of data and favoring not only the growth of a multidisciplinary dialogue on illicit trade but also the realization of a global and shared response to the problem.

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