

TUESDAY REITANO

Criminal organizations and peacebuilding

Tuesday Reitano is Deputy Director at the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime. With her small team she uncovers illicit trafficking that threatens peacebuilding. Here she explains the importance of organized crime, her experiences in the field and what keeps her motivated.

Tuesday Reitano has always wanted to make a difference. She believes very deeply in the values the United Nations represent and genuinely in a more peaceful world. In keeping with her values and beliefs, she joined the United Nations at twenty-two and worked as an inter-agency specialist. After more than ten years working at the UN in various roles, she decided to create her own NGO.

Launched in 2013, the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime aims to propose innovative strategies in response to organized crime. The idea is to create a global initiative to open the debate to like-minded countries and also to those in opposition. It encourages dialogue, explores new ideas and experiments and creates a strategy that can be adapted to a multilateral system.

According to Tuesday Reitano “It has become very clear that illicit trade and financing and criminal networks are obstacles to peace and peacebuilding”. The negative influence of organized crime on peacebuilding has grown over the last few



decades. In fact, the phenomenon is not new, but the scale is unprecedented.

She adds that “organized crime is a threat to peace, security and development.” It was essential to find an appropriate response to this problem.

A tiny machine

The creation of the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime came about as “there was a need for a structure outside the multilateral system to debate issues of organized crime and how they should be responded to.” From her experience working at the UN, Tuesday Reitano explains that “in the contemporary geopolitical environment, the UN system faces a set of existential challenges. It has an expanded body of member states, not all of whose interests are aligned to the founding principles of the UN Charter, and that blocks progress in key areas, including in peace and security.”

An alternative response was necessary. Unlike the United Nations which is a “huge organization that can have an enormous collective impact, but is a heavy machine to turn, the Global Initiative is a tiny organization that is agile and responsive. I, as an individual, can see greater evidence of the impact that I have” says Tuesday Reitano. Working in a small team of fifteen people also allows more flexibility. “We can do things that we are excited about and it is cool” she summarizes with a smile.

"It is quite awe-inspiring to see States following your suggestions."

A recognized work

How does the organization fight against organized crime concretely, and what is Tuesday Reitano’s role? How does a small team confront such large problems? The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime uses three methods. The first one is research. They investigate and analyze the political economy of the illicit trafficking and map the actors involved. The second is dialogue. They work openly through conferences and public forums, but also behind closed doors to try to disseminate the findings of their research. The aim of the dialogue is to integrate responses through different groups or task teams that determine a strategic answer. The final method is the implementation of catalytic programs. The idea is to create a sustainable alternative for the people whose livelihood comes from profit in the illicit economy.

When asked about the change that this “tiny machine” has made, Tuesday Reitano

explains that “a journalist recently informed me that the Italian government had attributed a certain policy move to me directly and it was an idea from one of my reports! It is quite awe-inspiring to see States following your suggestions and moving forward with a new strategy and set of responses” she says enthusiastically.

An exhilarating and terrifying job

Even if Tuesday Reitano can see the impact of the work that she has, it is a “difficult and sometimes intimidating job to be responsible for leading an organization, and paying people's salaries.”

Furthermore, investigating organized crime can result in dangerous and life-threatening situations. “Is it really worth it?” Do I really want to put people at risk when I don't need to?” asks Tuesday Reitano. “Is this person's life or health worth a report or a program? - Of course not!”

She also considers herself lucky that only on one occasion she felt life-threatening danger, and that was in Yemen. She has also visited Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan, but was able to execute her work without disturbance or harm.

Therefore, how do you deal with such dilemmas and complicated situations? Tuesday Reitano explains with a smile: “our work has received very positive feedback: we seem to be making a difference and helping people. I therefore feel that we are on the right side”.

Léa Gillibert