



THEME- GROWING ILLICIT TRADE: DESTABILISING ECONOMIC WELFARE

Concept Note

BACKGROUND

In today's global landscape, rising geopolitical tensions, strained supply chains, and increasing environmental crises are creating conditions that enable the growth of illicit trade. These challenges are being actively exploited by criminal networks to expand their operations, ultimately leading to severe pressure on individual, societal and national safety and security. The problem of smuggling, counterfeiting and other forms of illicit trade are enemies of progress and development, and their expansion is detrimental to civilization.

The scale of global illicit trade is alarming, posing grave threats to economies, governance, and public safety. According to OECD estimates, the trade in illicit goods alone accounts for up to \$464 billion, representing 3.3% of global trade. The International Chamber of Commerce projects that the broader economic value of such illicit goods could rise to \$4.2 trillion by this year, factoring in both direct and indirect impacts. When considering the wider scope, transnational organized crime, which includes illicit trade, is estimated to generate between \$1.6 trillion and \$2.2 trillion annually, underscoring the immense scale and evolving nature of this global menace.

In addition, counterfeiting also represent a massive underground economy, with estimated annual losses of around \$500 billion. The market for illegal tobacco products, often overlooked, contributes another \$50 billion annually to the illicit trade ecosystem. This vast shadow economy not only drains public revenues but also empowers criminal syndicates, undermines legitimate businesses, and destabilizes communities. Addressing these illicit markets requires coordinated global action, strong regulatory frameworks, cross-border cooperation, and enhanced public awareness.

FICCI CASCADE

In India, FICCI CASCADE (Committee Against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Activities Destroying the Economy) is a dedicated forum which actively works in curbing the problem of growing illicit trade in smuggled, pass offs and counterfeit goods. FICCI CASCADE has been working extensively in creating awareness on tackling smuggling and counterfeiting and emphasising the need to address this grave threat to the economy, and the society at large. It has over the years engaged with the industry, government, enforcement agencies, media and general consumers to deeply dive into this issue and provide effective strategies to mitigate the challenge.

In its decade long journey FICCI CASCADE has successfully stirred an active debate on this topic both nationally and internationally and engages with various ministries at national and state level. FICCI CASCADE also felicitates the best performing officers for their outstanding achievement in the prevention of counterfeiting & smuggling, and enforcement of anti-smuggling & anti-counterfeiting laws to encourage and acknowledge the work of law enforcement agencies.

The recent report released in September 2024 titled – **“Challenging Landscape of Illicit Trade: How Changing Factors of Consumption Affect Illicit Markets in 5 Key Industries in India”**, estimates the size of illicit market in India at Rs 7,97,726 crore in 2022-23. Considering 5 key industries—FMCG (packaged goods), FMGC (personal and household care goods), alcohol, tobacco, and textiles & apparel, where illicit trade significantly undermines legitimate businesses, distorts market competition, and erodes government tax revenues.

Since its inception CASCADE has conducted over 120 state level awareness programs, 65 youth festivals, 75 capacity building programs, 10 international conferences, 11 in-conversation programs, 2 auto-rallies, 9 twitter space sessions, 16 interactive sessions – all of these have touched over 1 lakh students and seen the participation of 35,000 officers on a host of identified topics and thrust areas.

MASCRADE 2025

Movement Against Smuggled and Counterfeit Trade (MASCRADE) is a key initiative developed in response to the alarming growth of illicit trade—an issue that continues to jeopardize legitimate businesses, erode consumer trust, and endanger public and national security. Since its inception, FICCI CASCADE has been at the forefront of the fight against smuggling and counterfeiting. Through sustained advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and widespread public awareness campaigns, CASCADE has worked tirelessly to highlight the severe socio-economic consequences of illicit trade and to foster a culture of compliance and vigilance.

As part of these efforts, CASCADE organizes MASCRADE, its annual flagship international conference, which serves as a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and strategic action among policymakers, enforcement agencies, industry leaders, and civil society. Building on this legacy, **the 11th edition of MASCRADE will convene on September 18–19, 2025, at Hotel Lalit, New Delhi**, bringing together key stakeholders to further strengthen the global response to smuggling and counterfeiting. **The theme of this year's conference is "Growing Illicit Trade: Destabilising Economic Welfare".**

The conference underscores the urgent need for a united global response to the growing menace of illicit trade and its far-reaching consequences on economies, governance, and public well-being. **MASCRADE 2025** calls for coordinated action and strategic interventions to counter these emerging threats. Promoting genuine products, empowering consumers with knowledge, and reinforcing legal deterrence are critical to safeguarding economic welfare and securing the development gains of nations.

Various institutions of international repute such as WCO, OECD, INTERPOL, WIPO, UNODC, INCB-UN, UKIPO, JETRO, DKPTO, TRACIT, USPTO, US Dept. of Homeland Security, Australian Border Force and subject matter experts from Denmark, Italy, France, Belgium among others are working concertedly to address this issue in the global arena. A coordinated approach, both at the national and international levels, is the need of hour to effectively combat this critical challenge.

Our previous editions include:



MASCRADE 2024

Building Resilient Economies and Implementing Robust Measures from a Global Initiative against Smuggling and Counterfeiting
25th – 26th September 2024, New Delhi



MASCRADE 2023

Tackling Illicit Trade: Socio-Economic Perspectives and Way Forward
28th -29th September 2023, New Delhi



MASCRADE 2022

Unleashing the Power of Consumers in the fight against Smuggling and Counterfeiting
22nd -23rd September 2022, New Delhi

**MASCRADE 2021**

Impact of Counterfeiting and Smuggling on Personal Health and Safety
21st -22nd January 2021, New Delhi

**MASCRADE 2019**

Containing Counterfeiting, Smuggling and Piracy: A Winning Strategy
26th -27th September 2019, New Delhi

**MASCRADE 2018**

Ensuring Brand Security for Sustained Businesses and Employment Generation
1st -2nd November 2018, New Delhi

**MASCRADE 2017**

Protect your Brand Globally: Fight Counterfeiting, Smuggling and Piracy
12th -13th October 2017, New Delhi

**International Conference on Illicit Cross Border Trade in Goods: Impact on Economy and Consumers**

8th December 2016, New Delhi

**International Conference on Illicit Trade – Threat to National Security and Economy**

15th January 2016, New Delhi

**International Conference on 'Trade in Counterfeit, Pirated and Smuggled Goods - A Threat to India's National Security and Economy'**

19th -20th September 2013, New Delhi

GLIMPSES OF PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF MASCRADE







Strategic Priorities Driving MASCRade 2025

- Analyzing the growing economic and social risks posed by smuggling and counterfeiting on global and Indian economies.
- Promoting international cooperation and policy harmonization to create a united front against illicit trade.
- Encouraging intelligence-led enforcement strategies to dismantle high-risk networks.
- Strengthening legal frameworks and leverage cutting-edge technologies for effective monitoring and control.
- Reinforcing global partnerships among governments, enforcement bodies, and international institutions.

Key Deliverables from MASCRade 2025

- Formulation of actionable policy recommendations for a multi-dimensional enforcement strategy.
- Strengthened collaboration and information-sharing between enforcement agencies, industry stakeholders, and regulatory authorities.

Takeaways for Participants- Capacity Building, Knowledge Sharing, and Strategic Insights

- Expert-led insights into global best practices in tackling counterfeiting and smuggling.
- Deeper understanding of sector-specific challenges and collaborative solutions.
- Opportunities to build long-term alliances with stakeholders committed to curbing illicit trade.

Who Should Attend MASCRade 2025

 **Industry Professionals**

 **Consumer Rights Activists**

 **Legal Experts**

 **International Institutions**

 **Technology Providers**

 **Enforcement Agencies**

 **Media**

 **Consumers**

 **Policymakers**

Themes Driving the Dialogue

- Driving Economic Prosperity: Confronting the Global Challenge of Illicit Trade
- Innovation at the Forefront: Using Emerging Technology to Combat Counterfeiting and Smuggling
- Empower, Educate, and Eliminate: A Unified Multilateral Response to Illicit Trade and Tax Evasion
- Expert Speak: Policy, Strategy & Enforcement — Connecting the Dots on Illicit Trade and Tax Compliance
- Disrupting Organized Crime: Enforcement Strategies for a Borderless Threat
- Resilience in Action: Industry-Led Solutions to Counter Smuggling and Counterfeiting