India's COP8 Delegation should Include Industry Stakeholders, Says TII

With the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) Conference of Parties (COP8) Meeting being scheduled for October 1-6, 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland, The Tobacco Institute of India (TII) has called upon the Indian Government to undertake prior consultation with farmers and other Industry stakeholders on the FCTC Articles contained in the COP8 Agenda.

In a Press Statement, issued on August 13, 2018, the Institute has also sought inclusion of stakeholder representatives in the official Indian delegation to the FCTC COP8 which will discuss and adopt measures in relation to the FCTC Articles.

“This will ensure that the stakeholder view point on various issues arising out of the Agenda is taken cognizance of and no unilateral and discriminatory one-sided decision is taken by the Parties to the Conference that is inimical to the livelihood of millions dependent on tobacco in India,” TII emphasised.

TII pointed out that contrary to the United Nations doctrines and assertions of the FCTC, the COP processes have become extremely non-inclusive and secretive. “Despite repeated appeals by tobacco growers and farmer organizations over the years from across the world, participation of this vital stakeholder group in the Conference has consistently been denied,” TII noted.

TII said that framing of tobacco control policies at the Conference without the involvement of tobacco farmers, whose livelihood is seriously threatened, is unfair and unprincipled with the risk of their genuine concerns being subverted and severely compromised.

The Institute also apprehended that anti-tobacco activists and NGOs, who attend and participate in COP proceedings, will “seek to influence the decisions on the various Articles of the FCTC at the COP8 meeting through contentions that are not based on scientific evidence, leading to the serious undermining of the interest of tobacco farmers and other industry stakeholders”.

According to TII, any decision arrived at the COP8 unilaterally without taking the views of those that derive their livelihood from tobacco and which is not based on livelihood considerations will have a devastating impact on farm incomes and the lives of millions that are dependent on tobacco.

The Government of India as the President of COP8 should therefore, uphold the high democratic principles of the Indian Constitution and take a leadership position in facilitating the participation of tobacco farmers and other industry stakeholders in policy-making in the proceedings of the FCTC COP8, TII submitted.
Include industry men, farmers in WHO tobacco control meet

NEW DELHI: Tobacco Institute of India (TII) on Monday asked the government to undertake prior consultation with farmers and industry stakeholders before the WHO tobacco control conference in October.

The tobacco industry lobby group also demanded inclusion of stakeholder representatives in the official Indian delegation to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Conference of Parties (FCTC COP8) meeting to be held in Geneva from October 6-7.

"The best way to spread awareness is by holding a large number of public consultations," TII President Sanjay Mahindra said.

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The guidelines for the international tobacco control conference say no person connected to the industry can be nominated for participation.

Tobacco Institute of India has appealed to the Government of India to undertake prior consultation with farmers and industry stakeholders before the official Indian delegation to the FCTC COP 8.

The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) Conference of Parties (COP8) meeting, presided over by India, is being held in Geneva from the 9th to 16th October 2018 to discuss and adopt measures in relation to the Articles of the Convention. FCTC is an international convention that makes it obligatory for signatory countries to take prescribed tobacco control measures.

The request is bound to be rejected as the Guide for Delegates to the Conference of Parties 2018 clearly lays down: "In accordance with Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC an industry or any entity working to further its interests, or any person benefiting from the proceeds of tobacco control policies, is not eligible to participate as a stakeholder."