



# The Tobacco Institute of India

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Press Release

## **Include Tobacco Farmers and Industry Stakeholders in the Official Indian Delegation for Transparency and Democratic Process in the WHO FCTC COP7 – Tobacco Institute of India Appeals to the Government**

**New Delhi, August 30<sup>th</sup> 2016:** The WHO FCTC Conference of Parties (COP 7) Meeting is being hosted by India in Noida between the 7th and 12th of November 2016. As a representative body of Tobacco farmers and the Legal Cigarette Industry, the Tobacco Institute of India (TII) has requested the Government of India to include farmers and other Industry stakeholders in the official Indian delegation to the FCTC COP7.

As per the United Nations, democratic process is fundamental to all policy making both at an international and at the national level. The Guidance Note of the UN Secretary General on Democracy emphasizes the central role of democratic processes in the fulfillment of the goals of the UN.

The FCTC itself, through its Guiding Principles, upholds and promotes transparency, and participation of all constituents and stakeholders in its procedures. In fact, the Preamble to the FCTC recognizes the need to consider the livelihood and economic interests of tobacco growers and workers in implementing its provisions and be mindful of the social and economic difficulties that tobacco control programmes may engender in the medium and long term in some developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

The Conference of Parties organized under the aegis of FCTC which is a framework convention under the World Health Organization, a UN agency, should therefore, be carried out in an inclusionary manner and in line with the basic tenets of democratic process adopted by the UN and its various bodies.

**Mr. Syed Mahmood Ahmad, Director, Tobacco Institute of India,** said, *“We are concerned that at the behest of vested interests NGOs and anti-tobacco activists in India through their relentless and biased campaign are influencing the government’s tobacco control policy and promoting extreme regulations that are already hurting tobacco farmers and the legal industry in the country and causing widespread growth of illegal trade in cigarettes. The growth of illegal cigarettes and the consequent sharp decline in legal industry, leading to the drop in demand for locally grown tobaccos, is having a devastating impact on Indian tobacco farmers and their livelihood.”*

*“We are apprehensive that NGOs, who are allowed access to the FCTC COP7, will carry a strong voice during the Conference and attempt to impose their biased agenda on the meeting and may even succeed in ensuring adoption of excessive anti-farmer proposals by the Parties to the Conference causing further distress to tobacco farmers in the country.”* added, **Mr. Ahmad.**

It is therefore important that policy development in this area is not left to the tobacco control activists and NGOs alone. Instead and in order to protect the interest of farmers and legitimate

rights of other constituents of the tobacco industry, we appeal to the Indian Government to include Industry Stakeholders and representatives from the Tobacco Farming Community in the official Indian delegation to the Conference.

A democratic and participative approach in the formation of the Indian delegation to COP7 will ensure that the farmer and Industry view point on various issues arising out of the COP7 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.

It is our ardent appeal that the Government of India as the host country should uphold the high democratic principles of the Indian Constitution and facilitate the participation of tobacco farmers and other industry stakeholders in the proceedings of the FCTC COP7.