



# The Tobacco Institute of India

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## **TII Appeals to Government of India to Include Tobacco Farmers and other Industry Stakeholders in the Official Indian Delegation to the Geneva FCTC COP8**

**New Delhi, 13 August 2018:** The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) Conference of Parties (COP8) Meeting, presided over by India, is being held in Geneva from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2018 to discuss and adopt measures in relation to the Articles of the Convention.

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 undertake prior consultation with farmers and other Industry stakeholders and include stakeholder representatives in the official Indian delegation to the FCTC COP 8.

Indian Tobacco Farmers have also appealed to the Government to hold consultation with their representatives before the Conference to ensure that their livelihood dependence on tobacco is not undermined by extreme and unilateral decisions at the FCTC COP8. It is relevant to point out that an appeal to the Government for their inclusion in the official Indian delegation to the previous COP Meeting held in India in November 2016 was not acceded to.

**Mr. Syed Mahmood Ahmad, Director, TII,** said, *“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.”*

*Unlike the West with its large format organized retail trade, India has a vast and unique self-employed retailer base spread across both urban and rural areas with millions of small and marginal retailers deriving their livelihood from sale of tobacco products. Policy development without cognizing for the genuine concerns and apprehensions of this stakeholder group will have serious livelihood consequences resulting in huge unemployment and poverty issues.” – Mr. Ahmad added*

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 fulfilment of the goals of the UN.

Moreover, the Preamble to the FCTC itself recognizes the need to consider the livelihood and economic interests of tobacco growers and workers in implementing its provisions.

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.

### **Affiliations**

- International Tobacco Growers Association (ITGA) • Tobacco Merchants' Association, USA (TMA)
- CII • FICCI • ASSOCHAM • PHDCCI • ICCI • FAPCCI • ASCI
- Chambers of Commerce: Andhra, Karnataka, Maharashtra

However, anti-tobacco activists and NGOs attend the COP meetings as representatives of the member countries and participate in the proceedings. These activists, with their biased agenda, engage in a relentless campaign in support of extreme tobacco control policies at the Conference in complete disregard of the just rights of the millions who derive their livelihood from the sector.

*“The Industry is apprehensive that these anti-tobacco groups will once again 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.”*

We request the Government of India to engage extensively with the Industry Stakeholders on the FCTC Articles contained in the COP8 Agenda and also include Industry Stakeholders and representatives from the Farming Community in the official Indian delegation to the Conference. This is extremely important in order to arrive at a balanced and pragmatic position on various proposals and guidelines at the Conference.

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.

India is the world's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest producer of tobacco, an extremely important commercial crop for India. It provides livelihood to 45.7 million people, including farmers, farm labour, rural poor, small self-employed retailers, women, tribals etc., around 70% of whom are engaged in the agricultural sector and have no other means of sustenance.

*“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.