

# 'Include industry representatives in WHO tobacco control conference'

**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 1-6.

"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," TII Director Syed Mahmood Ahmad said in a statement.

Stating that "millions of small and marginal retailers" derive their livelihood from sale of tobacco products in India, he said, "Policy development without cognising for the genuine concerns and apprehensions of this stakeholder group will have serious livelihood consequences resulting in huge unemployment and poverty issues."

TII, which represents leading cigarette manufacturers such as ITC, Godfrey Philips and VST, further said despite repeated appeals by tobacco growers and farmer organisations over



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the years from across the world, their participation in the Conference has consistently been denied.

"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," it added.

This is extremely important in order to arrive at a balanced and pragmatic position on various proposals and guidelines at the conference, Tobacco Institute of India said. PTI