

UN-backed treaty against illicit tobacco trade set to take effect in September

A United Nations-backed treaty aimed at stopping the illicit trading of tobacco products, is set to enter into force on 25 September, marking a diplomatic breakthrough in efforts to protect public health and strike back against the criminal organizations profiting from such deals.

Officials from the Secretariat of the [World Health Organization](#) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control ([WHO FCTC](#)) explain that the package of measures agreed by countries which 45 Parties and the European Union have signed up – known as [the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products](#) (the Protocol)- was developed in response to a growing illegal trade in tobacco products, often across borders.

“With the entering into force of the Protocol, we have made yet another step in our global efforts in tobacco control,” said [Vera da Costa e Silva](#), the Head of Secretariat of the WHO FCTC, which will also serve as the Secretariat for the Protocol.

If the global illicit trade was eliminated overnight, governments would see an immediate gain of at least \$31 billion in revenue; and according to studies, beginning in 2030, more than 160,000 lives could be saved per year, that would otherwise be lost to tobacco-related illness.

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“The illicit trade of tobacco products creates a shadowy market that not only destroys health, but also fuels organized crime and deprives governments of tax revenues,” said [WHO](#) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

So far, 45 countries have ratified the Protocol plus the European Union and many others are expected to do so over the coming months. The Protocol will enter into force on 25 September 2018.

“Brazil’s accession to the Protocol is an additional step not only to combat illicit trade, but also to strengthen the national strategy to protect tobacco control policies and promote public health,” said the country’s Health Minister, Gilberto Occhi.

“The accession of the Republic of Mauritius to this Protocol proudly demonstrates the country’s commitment and unflinching support to the international community in their relentless drive to eliminate all forms of

illicit trade in tobacco products,” said the country’s Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Anwar Husnoo.



Arne Hoel / World Bank

Overview of Tanger-Med, a cargo and passenger port located about 40 km east of Tangier, Morocco.

Brazil and Mauritius are among the 181 parties to the WHO FCTC – an overarching agreement, which can be strengthened by associated protocols.

The WHO FCTC entered into force on 27 February 2005 and has since become one of the most rapidly and widely embraced treaties in United Nations history. Only WHO FCTC parties can become parties to the Protocol.

Protocol aims to make supply chain of tobacco products secure

The Protocol covers all forms of illicit trade in tobacco products – any practice or conduct related to producing, shipping, receiving, being in possession of, distributing, selling or buying tobacco products, that are prohibited by law.

The Protocol aims to make the supply chain of tobacco products secure through a series of governmental measures. It requires the establishment of a global tracking and tracing regime within five years of its entry into force.

Other provisions to ensure control of the supply chain include licensing, recordkeeping requirements, and regulation of internet-sales, duty-free sales and international transit.

To address the illicit trade that already exists, the Protocol establishes new criminal guidelines, addresses liability and seizure payments, as well as the disposal of confiscated products.

Other obligations aim to boost international cooperation, with measures on

information-sharing, technical and law enforcement cooperation, mutual legal and administrative assistance, and extradition.

In light of the irreconcilable conflict between the tobacco industry's interests and public health interests, Parties have to ensure that any interaction with the tobacco industry is carried out with maximum transparency, and must not delegate any of their obligations in tracking and tracing to the tobacco industry.

The first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol ([MOP1](#)) will take place in Geneva, Switzerland from 8 to 10 October 2018, immediately after the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO FCTC ([COP8](#)).