SEOUL, Republic of Korea ¦ 12 November 2012 – The delegates of more than 140 Parties to the WHO Framework **Convention** on **Tobacco Control** (WHO FCTC) adopted a new international treaty Monday, setting the rules for **combating illegal trade** through control of the supply chain and international cooperation. The Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products commits countries to establishing, as a central measure, a global tracking and tracing system to reduce the illicit trade of tobacco products.

“The elimination of all forms of illicit trade in tobacco products, including smuggling and illegal manufacturing, is an essential component of tobacco control,” says Ambassador Ricardo Varela, President of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the WHO FCTC. “In adopting this new Protocol today by consensus, countries have reiterated their historic commitment towards protecting the health of their citizens, particularly the young and vulnerable.”

Illicit trade in tobacco products is a global problem. It undermines health objectives, imposes additional strain on health systems and weakens tax and other measures designed to strengthen tobacco control. It leads to substantial revenue losses to governments around the world but generates vast financial profits for illegal traders. These are often used to fund transnational criminal activity.

“Eradicating illicit trade in tobacco products constitutes a clear win-win situation for governments and their people,” says Dr. Haik Nikogosian, Head of the Secretariat of the WHO FCTC. “The new Protocol establishes what actions constitute unlawful conduct and sets out related enforcement and international cooperation measures, such as licensing, information-sharing and mutual legal assistance that will help counteract and eventually eliminate illicit trade.”

After today’s adoption by the Conference of the Parties, the procedural steps for the Protocol on Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products to enter into force are:

- Protocol open for signature by the Parties for one year, starting 10 January 2013;
- Ratification process, according to national law;
- Entry into force (90 days after 40 ratifications).

The Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products was drafted and negotiated by an Intergovernmental Negotiating Body, mandated to undertake this work by the COP at its second session in 2007.

After four years of negotiations, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body held its fifth and final session from 29 March to 4 April 2012 in Geneva, where the Parties reached consensus on the draft Protocol.

The COP is the central organ and governing body of the Convention and is currently meeting for the fifth time since the treaty entered into force in 2005. The number of Parties to the Convention has grown steadily over the years, from the 40 parties that brought the treaty into force in 2005, to 113 at the first session of the Conference of the Parties in 2006, and 176 as of today.

The WHO FCTC was adopted by the World Health Assembly on 21 May 2003 and entered into force on 27 February 2005. It has since become one of the most rapidly and widely embraced treaties in United Nations history.