

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **APPOINTMENT OF FORMER TOBACCO INDUSTRY DIRECTOR AS DEPUTY MINISTER OF COMMERCE IN THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT MUST BE REVOKED**

Wednesday 13 February 2019 (Paris, France) - The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) calls for the Turkish Government to revoke the appointment of Mr Riza Tuna Turagay – a Director of British American Tobacco until January 2019 – as Deputy Minister of Commerce by Presidential decree.

Dr Gan Quan, Director of Tobacco Control at The Union, said: “There is a fundamental and irreconcilable conflict between the tobacco industry’s interests and public health policy interests. This recent appointment by Presidential decree comes as a huge disappointment and setback for Turkey.

“We urge the government to take immediate action to revoke this appointment in order to protect public health from the terrible influence of the tobacco industry.”

Turkey is a high-burden tobacco-use country. According to the latest World Health Organization (WHO) report on the global tobacco epidemic in 2017, 16.8 percent of the youth population use tobacco and 30.9 percent of adults use smoking tobacco.

In response to this, the government has worked to strengthen the country’s capacity for tobacco control using a range of tools including taxes, bans on smoking in public places and extensive public education programmes. Turkey has been recognised by the WHO as an international leader in tobacco control and the government has been committed to tobacco control policies for more than a decade.

Turkey has been a Party to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) since 2005, which stipulates in Article 5.3 that public health policies must be protected from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry.

In 2015, Turkey became the only country in the world to have accomplished all MPOWER measures for tobacco control at the highest level of achievement: M (Monitoring), P (Smoke-Free Policies), O (Cessation Programmes), W (Warnings): Health Warnings and Mass Media, E (Advertising Bans), and R (Taxation).

The appointment of a tobacco industry executive to a governmental position is a violation of Article 5.3 of the FCTC and undermines the government’s duty to protect the country’s people from exposure to tobacco and tobacco smoke.

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For more details, contact: [press@theunion.org](mailto:press@theunion.org)

## **About the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union):**

The Union is a global scientific organisation with the mission to improve health among people living in poverty. We do that by conducting scientific research, working with governments and other agencies to translate research into better health for people around the world, and delivering projects directly in the field. The Union is made up of a membership body of people around the world who help to advance our mission, and a scientific institute that implements public health projects within countries. For close to 100 years, we have been leaders in the fight against some of the world's biggest killers, including tuberculosis, lung diseases and tobacco use.

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