

## Union statement for media

For immediate release

**Contact:** Johanna Dollerson

**Email:** [press@theunion.org](mailto:press@theunion.org)

**Tel:** +44 7920 421783



**International Union Against  
Tuberculosis and Lung Disease**  
*Health solutions for the poor*

World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties  
Begins in New Delhi, India

### **The Union launches the Index of Tobacco Control Sustainability to assess and guide national tobacco control programmes to become sustainable, complementing WHO FCTC processes:**

#### **First round reports reveal countries commonly lack measures to protect public health policy from tobacco industry interference [WHO FCTC Article 5.3]**

Statement of Dr Ehsan Latif

Director, Department of Tobacco Control

The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union)

**Monday, 7 November 2016 (Edinburgh, UK)** – Tobacco use is still the greatest preventable cause of death worldwide. It currently claims more than six million lives each year. In total it is projected to kill up to one billion people this century unless there is a coordinated and sustained intervention.

The World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control [WHO FCTC] Conference of the Parties [COP] is the forum for this life-saving and strategic work. Over the last ten years governments from around the globe have met at COP to build consensus on how the policies proven to reduce tobacco use should be developed and implemented. As an official observer to the Conference of the Parties The Union has been privileged to both witness and contribute to this process – we are always profoundly impressed by the commitment and investment countries display during these detailed and lengthy negotiations. The impact of these endeavours has surpassed what even the most optimistic public health advocates projected when the WHO FCTC was first negotiated. Billions of people are now protected from second-hand smoke and from the powerful marketing campaigns of the tobacco industry, for example.

At COP 7 held in New Delhi this week, countries will unite to focus on how these life-saving policies can be implemented more quickly, more effectively and more consistently across the globe. It is an

exciting moment for the public health community. We urge countries to wholeheartedly pursue the goals they committed to when they became Parties to this ground-breaking treaty. Much progress has been made, but the task is far from complete. Rates of tobacco use must be reduced and interventions to prevent the tobacco industry from interfering in public health policy must be put in place if we are to curb the tobacco epidemic and its current devastating trajectory. We must all commit to this work for the long haul.

In recent months The Union has been finalising a new tool designed to complement WHO FCTC supports and processes, and to assist governments to assess the sustainability of their national tobacco control programmes. The new Index of Tobacco Control Sustainability has just been published alongside a first round of assessments from 24 countries with the highest burden of tobacco use. We designed the Index to give countries a clear insight into how well their tobacco control programmes are structured for future impact and resilience. An assessment identifies areas of strength and importantly, highlights infrastructural gaps. It gives those leading national tobacco control programmes a clear baseline from which they can prioritise future work and can become a benchmarking tool to track progress towards sustainability. A lack of adequate protection against tobacco industry interference was flagged as a theme common to all 24 countries in the first tranche of assessments, for example.

India, our host nation for COP 7 was amongst the 24, having one of the world's largest populations of tobacco users (smoked and smokeless). The India assessment revealed progress in infrastructure – allocating a substantial national tobacco control budget, having a national law, implementation and co-ordination infrastructure, and a vibrant civil society network. We congratulate the Government of India and civil society for these developments and encourage them now to strengthen their tobacco control policies to become fully compliant with WHO FCTC articles. At present, minor gaps in the law make implementation challenging. Further, we urge the government to protect their investments in tobacco control by introducing a strong policy to insulate public health policy against tobacco industry interference. Implementing WHO FCTC Article 5.3 and laws to prevent Corporate Social Responsibility schemes are vital for achieving this goal. We thank the Government of India for hosting this important Conference of the Parties and hope that this international platform will mobilise policymakers, public health advocates and civil society to take a global lead in tobacco control.

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

Since its founding as a global scientific organisation in 1920, The Union has drawn from the best evidence and expertise to advance solutions to public health challenges affecting people living in poverty. The Union is currently progressing solutions for tuberculosis, HIV, tobacco-related diseases and other lung and non-communicable diseases. With close to 17,000 members active in more than 140 countries, The Union has its headquarters in Paris and 11 offices in Africa, the Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, North America and South-East Asia. For more information on The Union's tobacco control work please visit [www.tobaccofreeunion.org](http://www.tobaccofreeunion.org).

**Contact:**

The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union)  
Department of Tobacco Control  
8 Randolph Crescent  
Edinburgh  
UK  
EH3 7TH