GENEVA, 10 January 2013 – The Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco **Products**, adopted by the Parties to the WHO Framework
Convention on Tobacco Control
(WHO FCTC) in November , was opened for signature by the Parties in a ceremony at WHO Headquarters. The new international treaty is aimed at combating illegal trade in tobacco products through control of the supply chain and international cooperation. As a key measure, Parties commit to establishing a global tracking and tracing system to reduce and eventually eradicate illicit trade.

Illicit trade in tobacco products is a global problem. It increases the accessibility and affordability of tobacco products thus undermining tobacco control policies and severely burdening health systems. In addition, illicit trade leads to significant revenue losses for governments. The elimination of all forms of illicit trade including smuggling and illegal manufacturing is therefore an essential component of tobacco control.

“The protocol gives the world a unique legal instrument for countering and eventually eliminating a sophisticated international criminal activity that costs a lot, especially for health,” said WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan on the occasion of the signing ceremony.

The new Protocol will help to protect people across the globe from the health risks of tobacco. The tobacco epidemic is one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced. It kills nearly six million people a year. Approximately one person dies every six seconds due to tobacco and this accounts for one in 10 adult deaths.

“The adoption of the Protocol is the result of close cooperation between multiple sectors of government”, said Dr Haik Nikogosian, Head of the Secretariat of the WHO FCTC. “It also shows how a unified stand on a public health subject can benefit important government objectives on health and beyond, such as protecting revenues and countering criminal activities.”

Representatives of 12 Parties– China, France, Gabon, Libya, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Panama, Republic of Korea, South Africa, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and Uruguay – representing all six WHO regions, signed the Protocol during the ceremony. After the initial two days in Geneva, the Protocol will remain open for signature at the United Nations Headquarters in New York until 9 January 2014 and will enter into force 90 days after the 40th Party has ratified it.

The Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products was adopted at the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the WHO FCTC on
12 November 2012 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. It is the first protocol to the WHO FCTC and an

international treaty in itself.

The COP is the central organ and governing body of the Convention and comprises 176 Parties 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.

Additional links:
For the official version of the new Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, please follow this link:

http://treaties.un.org/Pages/DB.aspx?path=DB/Opening for Signature/page1_en.xml&menu=MTDSG

More information on the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control: http://www.who.int/fctc/en/