Geneva, 4 April 2012- After four years of negotiations, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB), with the participation of over 135 countries, agreed on a text of a Protocol to eliminate **illicit trade** in **tobacco** products.

“This is a historic moment for global tobacco-control efforts, as this is the first protocol under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC)”, says Mr Ian Walton-George, Chairman of the INB. “By agreeing to this Protocol, governments have reiterated their commitment to protect public health and tackle illicit trade in tobacco products.”

The Protocol sets the rules for combating illicit trade in tobacco products through control of the supply chain. It also establishes what constitutes unlawful conduct and sets out related enforcement and international cooperation measures.

Under the Protocol, the Parties propose to establish a global tracking and tracing system for tobacco products and reached agreement on other measures, such as licensing, liability, enforcement, information-sharing and mutual legal assistance. These measures are designed to counteract and eventually eliminate the illicit trade in tobacco products.

Illicit trade increases the accessibility and affordability of tobacco products, thus contributing to the spread of the tobacco epidemic; it is a global problem with serious consequences for health. It also undermines national economies and the tobacco-control policies of governments. The Protocol builds upon and complements Article 15 of the WHO FCTC.

The Protocol will be submitted for consideration and adoption to the Conference of the Parties to the WHO FCTC in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in November 2012.

Once adopted, it would become the first Protocol to the WHO FCTC, which is itself the first and only global health treaty negotiated under the auspices of WHO. The Protocol will enter into force after 40 ratifications.

It was also agreed that the Secretariat of the WHO FCTC will serve as the Secretariat of the Protocol.