

MEDIA RELEASE

TRACIT Welcomes the Forthcoming Entry into Force of the WHO Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products

New York, USA, 4 July 2018 - With the UK last week becoming the 40th party to the World Health Organization (WHO) Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products (the Protocol), this instrument finally achieved the threshold support needed for it to enter into force within the next 90 days.

“This is a significant milestone in the fight against illicit trade in tobacco,” said TRACIT Director General Jeff Hardy. **“It sends a strong signal that the international governance community has an appetite to rally its forces against illicit trade generally.”**

Tobacco is perhaps the most widespread and well-documented sector vulnerable to illicit trade. According to the WHO, one in every 10 cigarettes consumed globally is illicit. Like virtually all forms of illicit trade, this illegal activity robs governments of tax revenue and subsidizes other forms of criminality, including drugs, arms and human trafficking.

While the entry into force of the Protocol is an important step in itself, this is just the starting point. For the Protocol to effectively address the problem, many more countries will need to become parties to it and set up the envisaged institutional, regulatory and legislative measures without delay.

Beyond tobacco, TRACIT believes that the Protocol holds enormous potential to support and leverage efforts to combat other forms of illicit trade that similarly exploit regulatory controls and supply chain vulnerabilities. For example, the requirement to “implement effective controls on all manufacturing of and transactions in, tobacco products in free zones” will ramp up attention to suspect manufacturing processes in the zones. Other tools, such as requirements to establish a licensing system for supply chain actors and shaping effective customer due diligence processes, can all serve as benchmarks for policy-makers intent on tackling illicit trade across sectors.

The First session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol will take place in Geneva, Switzerland, from 8-10 October 2018. **“The October meeting will be a particularly interesting event as the first testing ground of the willingness of its Parties to turn words into deeds,”** added Mr. Hardy.

TRACIT is an independent, private sector initiative to drive change to mitigate the economic and social damages of illicit trade by strengthening government enforcement mechanisms and mobilizing businesses across industry sectors most impacted by illicit trade.

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