



## **COP-4 overcomes industry efforts, delivers progress on global tobacco control**

PUNTA DEL ESTE, Uruguay, Nov. 20, 2010 – The fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the global tobacco treaty ended Saturday with major achievements for public health in the face of unprecedented efforts by the tobacco industry to block progress in reducing the millions of lives lost annually to tobacco-related diseases.

The 172 Parties to the treaty, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), rebuffed a months-long, global industry campaign and approved guidelines on tobacco flavourings and additives (Articles 9 & 10). This occurred despite the industry's efforts to paint the guidelines as a ban on certain varieties of tobacco that would put the livelihoods of millions of farmers in jeopardy, particularly in the developing world. Instead, COP delegates endorsed the guidelines' aim of limiting flavourings that are used by tobacco companies to attract young smokers.

The COP also voted to create a working group that will draft guidelines on tobacco taxation. Tobacco tax increases are the single most effective short-term measure to reduce tobacco consumption, but are often blocked by lack of awareness in finance ministries of the added revenue (and public health gains) to be made.

"Despite a slow start by this COP, the decisions taken by the sovereign states that negotiated the treaty this week demonstrate a willingness to protect the health of the citizens of the world rather than the interests of the tobacco industry," said Laurent Huber, Director of the Framework Convention Alliance (FCA), an alliance of more than 350 civil society organisations worldwide.

During the COP, industry-linked farmers' groups erected a tent across from the conference centre, from where they continued their misinformation campaign about the guidelines on tobacco flavours. Industry representatives also infiltrated a number of Parties' delegations.

"Credit must be given to host Uruguay, a small country that has stood up to a powerful adversary in the tobacco industry, for setting the tone of this COP. But we know the industry will not relent and will lobby very hard, at COP-5 or COP-6, against the adoption of strong and effective guidelines on tobacco taxation," Huber added.

Friday's decisions followed the adoption by the COP on Thursday of the Punta del Este Declaration, a vote of support for Uruguay, which has been forced to defend its ground-breaking tobacco control measures – including graphic warnings that cover 80 percent of tobacco packages – against a complaint by tobacco industry giant Philip Morris International at the World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID).

The Declaration affirmed the right of sovereign states to adopt public health measures that affect the use of tobacco industry trademarks. It reaffirmed that tobacco packaging and labelling measures set out in the FCTC and its guidelines do not violate international trade and investment agreements.

Other important developments during the COP included a decision to continue negotiations on an illicit trade protocol and to initiate work on supporting Parties to deal with liability (Article. 19), as well as improvements to the FCTC reporting system. Guidelines on education, communication, training and public awareness (Art. 12) and cessation measures (Art. 14) were also approved.

A final decision on the COP budget was still pending Saturday morning; however, there were encouraging signs, said Huber, including a creative solution to make up a looming US\$600,000 deficit.

"FCA urges Parties to adopt the same creative approach to funding the COP as they exhibited in earlier decisions this week. The lives of millions of people worldwide are at stake," he added.