

COP11 News

GENEVA 17 - 22 November 2025



International Tobacco Growers' Association
Echoing Tobacco Growers' Voices since 1984

Inside COP11

With the growing focus of COP11 on issues related to waste and filters, the discussions are increasingly shifting toward Article 18 (Protection of the environment and the health of persons) and Article 19 (Liability).

Follow a recent FCTC document that informs the official decisions:

Regulatory options to prevent environmental harm and pollution across the tobacco product life cycle

[Read Report](#)



ITGA and UNITAB united in addressing the challenges facing the tobacco sector

Outside COP11

ITGA and UNITAB EUROPE Presidents with a Joint Statement during COP11

Despite the relevance of the topics addressed at COP11, which carry significant economic, social and employment implications for rural communities, farmer representatives have not been granted the right to intervene. This exclusion limits the inclusiveness of the process and restricts the possibility of ensuring a balanced, evidence-based debate that reflects the perspectives of all stakeholders.

According to Mr. Masiello and Mr. Aranda, the COP should serve as a platform for constructive international cooperation, capable of reconciling public health goals with the protection of agricultural economies, the promotion of innovation and the pursuit of sustainability. They stressed the importance of avoiding overly ideological approaches or measures that disregard existing regulatory frameworks.

"UNITAB EUROPE and ITGA will continue to represent farmers with responsibility, transparency and determination" President Masiello and President Aranda concluded, "to ensure that decisions taken at international level duly consider the needs and dignity of agricultural workers, the sustainability of our supply chains and the socio-economic cohesion of our rural territories."

[Read the Full Press Release](#)



Presidents of ITGA José Javier Aranda and Unitab Gennarino Masiello in front of COP11

Daily Highlights

•The Philippine delegation commended for resisting COP11 proposals affecting farmers

[Read Story](#)

•Brazil proposes ending support for tobacco cultivation in a project to be discussed at Cop11

ITGA President José Javier Aranda Key points:

- Historically, the EU supported tobacco growers, but today only a few countries still provide meaningful assistance.
- *"What I keep saying, and it must be reiterated to exhaustion, is how unbelievable it is that the world's leading tobacco exporter and second-largest producer is under the greatest attack within its own government, proposing the most radical measures in these COP meetings. I just can't understand it."*

[View Translated Article](#)

•Brazilian lawmakers hold their third meeting with Brazilian diplomats in Geneva

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•COP11 enters the final stretch of discussions, and the focus remains on the proposal to ban cigarette filters

[Read Article](#)

WHO FCTC 20th Anniversary

Reflections on WHO FCTC COP Procedures and the Interpretation of Article 5.3

Over the past several Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), concerns about transparency, procedural fairness and the interpretation of Article 5.3 have grown significantly. A pattern has emerged in which rules adopted by Parties themselves are inconsistently applied, participation is increasingly restricted, and the decision-making environment has become progressively more opaque.

Misuse and Misinterpretation of Article 5.3

Article 5.3 was originally crafted to guide Parties in the formulation and implementation of national tobacco-control policies within their own jurisdictions. It was never intended to regulate interactions within international negotiations or dictate who may be present in COP discussions. Despite this, the article has increasingly been invoked to justify the exclusion of stakeholders whose perspectives differ from those endorsed by the Secretariat or anti-tobacco NGOs.

A law firm's legal analysis on this issue highlighted several key points:

- **Article 5.3 applies to national policymaking**, not to deliberations taking place "on the international plane."
- **Rule 32 of the WHO FCTC [Rules of Procedure](#)**, adopted by consensus, clearly states that COP public sessions must be open to the public, with Observers entitled to speak but not vote.
- **Decisions at COP4 to close public sessions had little legal basis**, and many Parties openly opposed the move.
- Despite this, **subsequent COPs have continued the practice**, often with no explanation.



ITGA Former President Roger Quarles handing 238.000 signatures to the Head of WHO FCTC Secretariat in 2010

WHO FCTC 20th Anniversary

Procedural Concerns at COP4 and COP5

At COP5, the exclusion of the public from proceedings was simply announced without justification. This practice directly contradicts **Rule 32**, which has not been respected since COP4.

According to internationally recognized **principles of good governance**, transparency and access to information are fundamental components of accountable institutional behaviour. The ongoing closure of sessions and selective access granted to observers and media are at odds with these standards.

Historical Contrast: Early Negotiations Were Open

It is worth recalling that the first session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) for the FCTC began **with a public hearing involving the public health community, the tobacco industry, and tobacco-growing groups**. This inclusive approach ensured that all relevant stakeholders could present their views. It **remains the only moment in FCTC history** when major tobacco-sector representatives were officially and meaningfully heard.

A Turning Point for COP Proceedings?

The continued tightening of participation and reliance on restrictive interpretations of Article 5.3 suggest that the COP process may have reached a critical point. Without clarification, the logic behind these exclusions becomes increasingly difficult to discern. Fundamental questions remain unanswered:

- What does Article 5.3 actually mean in the context of COP proceedings?
- On what basis are individuals, organizations, or even media outlets included or excluded?
- Who decides—and according to which transparent criteria?

Pressure on Delegations and the “Dirty Ashtray” Phenomenon

A further concern is the reported pressure placed on government delegations whose positions do not align with those promoted by the Secretariat or supporting NGOs. This environment has even given rise to the now-infamous “dirty ashtray” award, a form of public shaming intended to signal disapproval of certain delegations’ positions. For those who still question the reality of these practices, it bears repeating: this is happening within the framework of a United Nations treaty body.