



International Tobacco Growers' Association

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## **ITGA AFRICA WELCOMES COMESA'S CALL TO REJECT WHO PROPOSAL TO BAN TOBACCO INGREDIENTS**

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), has urged all its 19 member countries to oppose the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) guidelines 9 & 10, which recommend a ban of ingredients used in producing blended tobacco. It also urged member states to request the WHO to put in place proper consultation mechanisms for all affected stakeholders to participate in any future development of FCTC guidelines.

Commenting on the 14th COMESA Summit, held in Swaziland on 31 August and 1 September 2010, Francois van der Merwe, Chairman of the International Tobacco Grower's Association (Africa) welcomed COMESA's unified and strong position:

"COMESA's mandate is to grow trade and development in the Eastern and Southern African regions. These proposals from the WHO run contrary to these core objectives. It was agreed by COMESA that if the WHO imposes an ingredient ban on blended tobacco it will have disastrous consequences for many African countries, including many of its members. Tobacco growing is critical to the economies of some of Africa's poorest countries. These guidelines will unnecessarily cripple their economies and result in hundreds of thousands of African tobacco farmers losing their livelihoods."

"Africa cannot achieve its Millennium Development Goal of ending poverty if countries are handicapped by an enforced end to growing certain tobacco types – a very important industry for many countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. These devastating proposals being advanced by the WHO will, very disproportionately, hit the poorer African countries," added van der Merwe.

ITGA Africa calls on all African governments to follow the example set by COMESA, and to reject these guidelines. ITGA Africa is the African chapter of the ITGA. ITGA represents more than thirty million tobacco growers across Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and South America.

Notes to Editors:

1. The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) promotes regional economic integration through trade and investment. It has 19 member states, with a combined population of 430 million people.
2. The COMESA Summit also opposed FCTC guidelines 17 & 18 (outlining alternative livelihoods to tobacco growing) saying they are based on wrong assumptions and do not provide mechanisms to support diversification from tobacco.
3. To view the full COMESA communiqué go to <http://www.comesa.int/>

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