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Vice-President of the International Tobacco Growers' Association (ITGA)

Dear Participants of the International Tobacco Growers' Association (ITGA) Americas Meeting.

It is up to me, as ITGA's Vice-President, to close this session. I would like to thank the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Mr Dario Vargas, for his participation.

I would also like to thank for the collaboration of our member in the Dominican Republic, INTABACO, its Director, Mr. Rafael Almonte and his team, who made this meeting possible.

To our members from Argentina, Colombia, Brazil and the USA.

To our ITGA Secretariat in Portugal.

And to all who took part in the meeting today, being the first one organised by ITGA in person after two years of pandemic.

To conclude this session, during which we have tried to bring the most up to date information about our sector and the global situation, I would like to read a statement where we gather the conclusions of the issues discussed.

**Declaration agreed by Participants of the International Tobacco Growers' Association
(ITGA) Americas Regional Meeting 2022,
Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic, August 5th, 2022**

Member Organizations of the International Tobacco Growers' Association from the Americas call for dialogue between all major stakeholders at national and international level to address the growing challenges aggravated by the global pandemic, the disconcerting impact of climate change, the high costs of production and the persistent hostility of the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control against our sector.

Tobacco Growers Associations representing hundreds of thousands of growers from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, the United States and the Dominican Republic have gathered in Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic, on August 5, 2022.

Growers attending the meeting discussed in depth the challenges facing the sector and devoted special attention to the issues generating most pressure, particularly those related with the sustainability of farmers and the regions where tobacco is produced, considering tobacco production a pillar for the economies in these countries.

Among these issues, special emphasis has been given to high costs of production and rising inflation, which have been aggravated by the global pandemic and currently by the war in Ukraine, which poses an array of new challenges, too early to be fully comprehended. The

consequences of these unprecedented disruptive factors are adding to the already abundant challenges to levels not seen in decades.

Growers stated their concerns about the impact of climate change that is irreversibly affecting farming communities around the world.

What is more, tobacco growers express their willingness to contribute through their rich experiences to reduce the potential impact that tobacco growing may have on climate change. In addition, farmers express their availability to work with governments and institutions to support the necessary measures to be taken.

Tobacco growers gathered today, expressed their disappointment about the increasing hostility of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) with the tobacco sector.

Since its inception, the treaty has used the so-called Article 5.3 to keep tobacco growers and their legitimate representatives away from the dialogue and for almost 15 years, at the Conferences of the Parties (COP meetings) held by the FCTC secretariat every two years, tobacco growers have been prevented from participating and to be an inclusive part of the discussion where their livelihoods are at stake.

Article 5.3 lacks consistent legal arguments and the WHO FCTC is running these conferences inappropriately against its own rules of procedures.

Tobacco growers will, from now on, put high levels of pressure to ensure their participation and will do their utmost to ensure their legitimate representation at the future Conferences of the Parties. The next one will take place in Panama in 2022.

Tobacco growers appeal to all partners within and outside of the sector, mainly governments, companies, and other relevant players in the value chain, considering that tobacco production is an important generator of employment and provides great economic benefits in the countries where it is grown, to come together and face the common challenges in a united way.

Finally, farmers acknowledge the need for regulation of tobacco product consumption and insist on the need for a balance in order to avoid potentially devastating consequences for millions of farmers who still depend on the crop.

In this way, and to conclude this session of the Americas Regional Meeting of the World Organisation of Tobacco Growers, we ask for protection from our governments, so that the tobacco growers represented at this meeting can continue our work in a dignified way, helping our regions and communities.

ITGA is a non-profit organisation working for the cause of millions of tobacco farmers around the world. It fights for the inclusion of growers in global discussions, seeking to provide a strong collective voice at the international level to ensure the protection of growers and their families.