

WHO to open final talks on anti-tobacco trafficking accord

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Negotiators will hold final talks next week for a global deal to stem illegal tobacco trade that could net an extra \$50 billion annually in tax revenues, the World Health Organisation said Tuesday.

"Illicit trade is one of the most problematic areas," said Haik Hikogolian, who heads the UN health agency's anti-tobacco secretariat.

"It is not just a criminal activity, but a source of relatively cheap tobacco products, and that cheap product fuels consumption. By tackling illicit trade, we're tackling availability," he added.

In addition, the protocol on illicit tobacco trade could help governments recover between \$40 and \$50 billion in duties lost in smuggling.

"We are very proud that the convention designed for public health will also help society in tackling criminal activities and increasing government revenues," said Hikogolian.

The protocol will require signatory states to establish a tracking mechanism that could help in any probes of [illegal trade](#) in [tobacco products](#).

The last round of [negotiations](#) would open on March 29 and end on April 4, with a final draft to be sent to a ministerial meeting in November for adoption.

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