

# Global pact adopted to curb illicit tobacco trade

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More than 170 countries Monday adopted what World Health Organisation (WHO) chief Margaret Chan called a "game-changing" global pact to combat the illegal tobacco trade.

The treaty envisages an international tracking system which aims to halt the smuggling and counterfeiting of [tobacco](#) products—a trade which accounts for 11 percent of the total tobacco market and costs governments an estimated \$40 billion in lost tax revenue.

"This is a game-changing treaty," Chan said in an address to a meeting in Seoul of the WHO's Framework Convention on [Tobacco Control](#) (FCTC), which has been ratified by 176 countries since coming into force in 2005.

"This is how we hem in the enemy," she added, calling the pact a major step towards "eliminating a very sophisticated criminal activity".

The protocol gives signatory states five years to establish a tracking and tracing mechanism on cigarettes and every other tobacco product. The system will use non-removable markings and will be coordinated globally to detect illegal tobacco trading.

Agents, suppliers and [tobacco manufacturers](#) will all have to be licensed. Manufacturers will have to carry out checks on customers to ensure they are genuine or if they have associations with criminal organisations.

In her address Monday, Chan lambasted the [tobacco industry](#) for seeking to "maintain its profits and kill at the same time" and accused it of complicity in the illicit tobacco trade.

"It is a ruthless industry that quite literally cannot afford to lose.

"It behaves like a corrosive substance that can eat and slip through any cracks or fissures in the armour of our defences," she said.

Monday's pact marks a departure for the FCTC, whose main focus so far has been on curbing demand for tobacco products rather than controlling the supply chain.

The Framework Convention Alliance (FCA), which groups around 300 non-government organisations working for tobacco control, said it was "excited" by the adoption of the pact, which required four years of intense negotiations.

"The illicit trade in tobacco feeds the worldwide tobacco epidemic by flooding markets with cheap producers and keeping tobacco taxes low," said FCA director Laurence Huber.

The six-day FCTC meeting in the South Korean capital will also review guidelines on tax measures to reduce tobacco demand, recommendations on promoting alternatives to tobacco growing, and regulation of smokeless [tobacco products](#) like e-cigarettes.

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