

**ORGANIZATION
OF THE BLACK SEA
ECONOMIC
COOPERATION (BSEC)**

**WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION
(WHO)**

**BSEC-WHO MEETING
ON TOBACCO TAX AND ILLICIT TRADE: EVIDENCE
BY THE BSEC MEMBER STATES**

(BSEC Headquarters, 29 September 2015)

Summary Proceedings

1. The BSEC-WHO Meeting on Tobacco Tax and Illicit Trade: Evidence by the BSEC Member States was held in Istanbul, at the BSEC Headquarters, on 29 September 2015. It was jointly organized by the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Permanent International Secretariat (BSEC PERMIS) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

2. Welcoming statements were delivered by Mrs. Brândușa Predescu, Special Representative of the Romanian Chairmanship-in-Office to BSEC; Ambassador Traian Chebeleu, Deputy Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS; Dr. Vinayak M. Prasad, Project Manager, Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI), WHO; and Dr. Katharina Kummer Peiry, Senior Legal Advisor, Secretariat of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), WHO.

2.1. Mrs. B. Predescu in her statement expressed her gratitude to the WHO Secretariat and BSEC PERMIS for organizing this event. Mrs. Predescu underlined that the Romanian Chairmanship-in-Office in BSEC under the motto “***Building Stability, Enhancing Connectivity***” is encouraging a constant and constructive dialogue, which is a prerequisite for stability in the region. It was mentioned that holding of the BSEC-WHO Meeting during the celebration of the 70th United Nations Anniversary is very symbolic as reflects the cooperation of UN Agencies for the future BSEC activities.

2.2. Ambassador T. Chebeleu in his statement on behalf of BSEC PERMIS welcomed the participants of the Meeting and expressed appreciation to Secretariat of the World Health Organization for co-organizing this event. It was mentioned that the importance of this Meeting is confirmed by the Meeting of the Ministers in charge of Healthcare of the BSEC Member States, which took place earlier this year, on 5 June 2015, in Chișinău. The Ministers adopted a Declaration on Enhanced Tobacco Control Measures for Better Social and Economic Development, asserting the need to strengthen the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products. He also expressed the hope that the exchanges during the Meeting will

bring about ideas and suggestions regarding how government taxation policies and actions by international organizations, in particular BSEC, can boost economic incentives and measures to reduce the demand for tobacco.

2.3. Dr. V. M. Prasad in his opening remarks underlined the importance of holding of the BSEC-WHO Meeting and emphasized that the WHO has effective instruments for pushing the international health research agenda towards effectiveness. It was mentioned that the objectives of the Meeting include sharing expertise with the BSEC Member States in the field of tackling illicit trade in tobacco products and develop a better understanding of the scope of illicit trade in tobacco products.

2.4. Dr. K. Kummer Peiry in her opening statement while highlighting the need for coordinated actions of the countries of the region to fight against illicit trade in tobacco products looked forward to finding by participants of the BSEC-WHO Meeting steps to move further their tobacco control policies. She invited the BSEC Member States who have not done so yet to initiate the process of becoming parties to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade to the WHO FCTC and wished to the participants to have interesting discussions and fruitful deliberations during the Meeting.

3. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of the following BSEC Member States:

Republic of Armenia
Republic of Azerbaijan
Republic of Bulgaria
Romania
Russian Federation
Republic of Turkey

4. The following BSEC Observers attended the Meeting:

Czech Republic
European Commission

5. The following BSEC Sectoral Dialogue Partner also participated in the Meeting:

Union of Road Transport Associations in the BSEC Region (BSEC-URTA)

6. The following Guests attended the Meeting:

European Union's Law Enforcement Agency (EUROPOL)
International Road Transport Union (IRU)
World Customs Organization (WCO)

The List of Participants is attached as **Annex I** and the Agenda of the Meeting is attached as **Annex II**.

7. The first session provided an overview of key terms of the illicit trade, types and causes of illicit trade and its linkages with the Health and the Economy. Participants discussed trends and

challenges in measuring and regulating illicit trade in tobacco in the BSEC Region and the reasons why an international protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products is required.

During the first session, the following presentations were made:

Mr. Mark Goodchild, WHO – “Illicit trade in tobacco: Summary of the Evidence”;

Dr. Katharina Kummer Peiry, FCTC Secretariat – “Article 5.3. of the FCTC: Firewalling against Tobacco Industry Interests”;

Dr. Sophia Delipalla, WHO – “Trends and Challenges in Measuring and Regulating Illicit Trade in Tobacco in the BSEC Region”;

Mr. Austin Rowan, European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) – “Reasons for a Protocol to Eliminate the Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products”.

8. During the second session, the Panel discussions on the role of intergovernmental bodies in international cooperation on elimination of illicit trade and on the opportunities and challenges at the national level in undertaking multisectoral actions in tackling illicit trade in tobacco products took place.

During the second session, the following presentations were made:

Mr. Giuseppe Marra, WCO – “International Cooperation to Counter Illicit Trade”;

Mr. Howard Pugh, EUROPOL – “The Role of Europol in Combating the Illegal Tobacco Trade”;

Dr. Vinayak M. Prasad, WHO – “Article 6-13 of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products”;

Mr. Filip Borkowski, EC – “Tobacco Products Directive 2014/40/EU”;

Dr. Katharina Kummer Peiry, FCTC Secretariat – “Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products: Becoming a Party”.

Question and answer sessions were held after the presentations. The presentations provided to the BSEC PERMIS are attached as **Annex III**.

9. On the third breakout session, the participants worked in two groups. While the task of the first Group was to discuss the possibility of improving national and regional coordination to tackle illicit trade in tobacco products under the ITP Protocol, the Group II was trying to identify needs, challenges and opportunities for action in ratifying/implementing of the Protocol. Also next steps towards ratification/implementation of Protocol, including development of roadmap for BSEC, were discussed during the session.

Final Conclusions and Recommendations

10. The following points were made in conclusion and recommendations:

10.1. The problem of illicit trade in tobacco products affecting the BSEC Member States is a matter of deep concern due to its adverse revenue and public health implications.

10.2. These problems are of cross-border, regional and global nature and combating them require greater regional and international cooperation.

10.3. The Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade to the WHO FCTC is a key legal instrument for combatting illicit trade in tobacco products, and there is need for its early entry into force.

10.4. The governmental institutions of the BSEC Member States are urged to promote coordination at national level and cooperation among BSEC Member States, and between BSEC Member States and States in other parts of the world, in order to combat illicit trade in tobacco products.

10.5. The importance of implementing the provisions of the Declaration of the Ministers in charge of Healthcare of the BSEC Member States on Enhanced Tobacco Control Measures for better Social and Economic Development, adopted in Chişinău on 5 June 2015, was emphasized.

10.6. The WHO and FCTC Secretariat are invited to continue to support the BSEC Member States in adopting and implementing effective policy measures to combat illicit trade in tobacco products.

11. The participants expressed their deep gratitude to World Health Organization (WHO) for its support and financial contribution for the realization of the Meeting, and to the BSEC PERMIS for the warm hospitality extended to them during the Meeting.
