

## International cooperation under the Protocol

This document relates to item 4.5 of the provisional MOP4 agenda and corresponds to document [FCTC/MOP/4/9](#)

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### **Key recommendations**

- GATC welcomes the continued focus on strengthening international cooperation under the Protocol, and encourages Parties to:
  - prioritize full assessment and implementation of the cooperation-related Articles, including those on information-sharing, mutual administrative assistance, and cooperation on investigation and prosecution.
  - make use of existing international and regional mechanisms, such as customs cooperation networks and enforcement platforms, to support implementation, rather than establishing new structures that would require additional financial and administrative resources.
  - Safeguard all cooperation measures from tobacco industry interference, in line with the principles and obligations of Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC.
- GATC encourages the Convention Secretariat, with the support of Parties, to develop toolkits and training materials that build on the work of the Working Group on Assistance and Cooperation established at MOP1 by decision FCTC/MOP1(10) in such a way to build capacity on Articles 21, 23, 24, 28, and 29.

### **Key messages**

- Illicit trade is a cross-border challenge that no single Party can fully tackle alone: cooperation is essential.
- Existing international frameworks provide practical, cost-effective avenues to implement Protocol obligations, maximizing their use is efficient and impactful.
- Safeguarding cooperation from tobacco industry interference ensures efforts remain credible and effective.

### **What to expect**

Parties are considering ways to strengthen the implementation of the international cooperation provisions of the Protocol, particularly those related to information exchange, cooperation between enforcement authorities, and mutual legal or administrative assistance. Recent reporting indicates that uptake of several of these cooperation mechanisms remains limited. Relatively few Parties have made use of the available channels for cross-border enforcement collaboration or for legal and administrative cooperation.

The discussions therefore aim to give greater attention to these cooperation elements, recognizing that illicit trade is a transnational issue that benefits from more coordinated action among Parties. Enhancing cooperation under the Protocol is presented as a means to support more effective responses to illicit trade and to contribute to broader public health and governance objectives.

## **Why this is important**

International cooperation is a backbone of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products. Parties face a range of complex and evolving challenges, including:

- Persistent cross-border criminal activity.
- Resource constraints, particularly for low- and middle-income Parties, which hinder full implementation.
- Legal and technical gaps in cooperation frameworks that limit effective investigations and prosecutions.
- Interference from the tobacco industry, which continues to obstruct stronger enforcement measures.
- Fragmented information flows between national agencies and across borders, weakening the capacity to take timely and coordinated action.

At previous sessions of the MOP, Parties acknowledged that advancing Articles on information-sharing, mutual administrative assistance, law-enforcement cooperation, and technical support is essential to achieving the objectives of the Protocol.

The Working Group on Assistance and Cooperation established at MOP1 by decision FCTC/MOP1(10) developed important foundations, including tools, recommendations, and mapping of existing mechanisms, which remain highly relevant today.