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Illicit tobacco trade

EU leadership needed to stub out illegal trade in tobacco

Today Belgian Green MEP Bart Staes hosts a conference on the illegal tobacco trade (1), ahead of a crucial UN meeting in March (2) that could secure a binding international agreement to combat this huge worldwide problem. Illicit tobacco is estimated to represent 12% of the global market.

Calling on the EU to play its part, **Bart Staes** said:

"It's essential that the EU takes the lead in the final negotiations and helps to win international support for a strong Protocol to combat the illicit tobacco trade. Anything less risks resembling the disappointing outcome of the UN Climate summit in Copenhagen - plenty promising words, but no binding agreement."

"Smuggling undermines tax policies and government efforts to protect health. It also robs governments worldwide of approximately \$35 billion annually in tax revenues. Tobacco consumption is rising dramatically in low and middle income countries, where the illicit trade is particularly high. If current patterns of tobacco use persist, smoking will cause more than 8 million deaths a year by 2030, of which more than 80 per cent will occur in low and middle income countries. Only a concerted international effort can break the illicit trade."

Notes to editors:

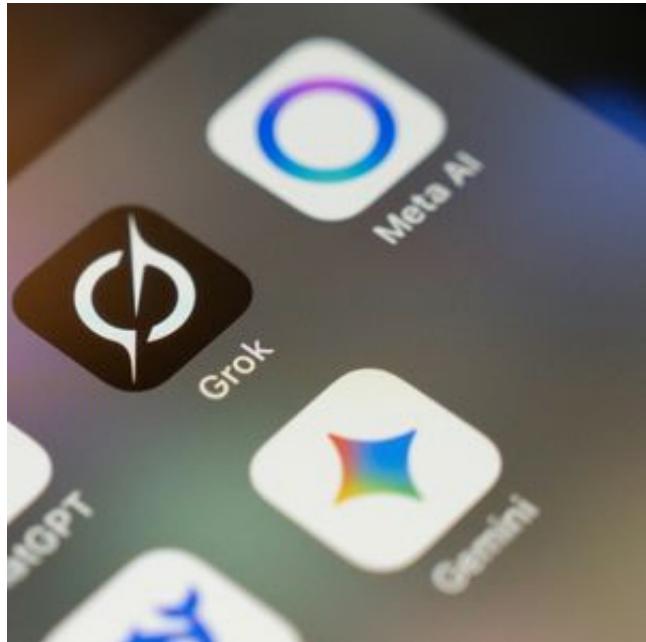
(1) "Trade in tobacco and consequences for low and middle income countries", today at: 17.30-19.00, Room ASP1G2, European Parliament, Brussels.

(2) 14-21 March, Geneva. Fourth meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body on a supplementary Protocol to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The FCTC, currently signed by 168 Parties, was negotiated under the auspices of the World Health Organisation and entered into force in 2005. The supplementary protocol is being sought to clarify parties' obligations in combating the illicit trade in tobacco products.

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