DECLARATION

ITGA Oriental Tobacco Forum, Komotini (Greece) September 11th 2015

Tobacco growers representing organizations from: Greece, Bulgaria, FYROM, Lebanon, , Serbia and Turkey met in Komotini, Greece, today, September 11th, 2015.

Tobacco growers present at the meeting discussed in depth the problems and opportunities of global production, and devoted special attention to the market situation for Oriental Tobaccos.

The growers highlighted the fact that they grow a crop, which supplies a legal market, still increasing in many countries across the world. Their production employs millions of family members and laborers all over the world and assures a sustainable prosperity for many regions and countries in this region.

As a matter of fact, tobacco is one of the few crops that can be grown profitably in many rural areas of this region and, being labor intensive, ensures the prosperity of hundreds of thousands of families directly and indirectly related with tobacco production. The sustainability of tobacco equals the sustainability of thousands of villages and their inhabitants all across this region, including many distant parts of Turkey.

In areas such as Eastern Macedonia and Thrace and similar areas in neighboring countries, hilly and mountainous, oriental tobaccos are monoculture and their elimination would force the migration of whole communities from areas where they have been a key economical, cultural, social and historical background for centuries, which are under threat with some excessive measures against tobacco

Growers are concerned about the fall in demand for their crop, which is partly attributable to decisions taken by Governments aiming at reducing consumption but also due to badly designed measures like excessive taxation and plain packaging, which create powerful incentives for counterfeit and contraband, effectively sabotaging the desired objectives of those measures. Other proposals, namely on ingredients and constituents allowed in tobacco products, may be approved at the COP7 meeting of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), next year in India and the growers call for the attention of their Governments to make sure they will not impact negatively their businesses and their future.

Growers recognize significant declines in consumption in some relevant markets and insist that the WHO’s FCTC should, as a matter of urgency, go back to the original mandate of its Article 17, as reiterated during the last Conference of the Parties (COP6) held in Moscow, in terms of providing assistance to the governments of some of the growing countries in the search for diversification where declining demand may affect the growers’ livelihoods and such diversification is possible.

Said search, as acknowledged by the FCTC itself, may only be conducted with the participation of the growers and their representative organizations, who have reiterated their offer to cooperate and share their vast experience and expertise in the possibilities and difficulties of tobacco crop diversification, where it is possible.