Date, place and duration of the seventh regular session of the Conference of the Parties

1. In accordance with Rules 3 and 4 of its Rules of Procedure, the Conference of the Parties (COP) shall decide on the date and duration of its next regular session, which shall be held at the seat of the Secretariat unless the COP decides otherwise. Pursuant to Rule 4.1 of the Rules of Procedure, it will also be recalled that after the third session, regular sessions of the COP shall be held every two years.

Proposed dates of the seventh session of the COP

2. In line with its mandate, the Bureau of the COP considered possible options for the date and duration of the seventh session of the COP (COP7). In light of the debate during COP5 and the request made by one region to bring the dates of the regular sessions of the COP closer to the start of implementation of the workplans and budgets, the Bureau would like to recommend to the COP to consider holding COP7 in the first quarter of 2017 (rather than in the last quarter of 2016).

3. At the time of writing, the Geneva International Conference Centre (CICG) would be available from 27 February to 4 March 2017, or from 6 to 11 March 2017.

4. Should the COP decide to hold COP7 in the last quarter of 2016, the CICG would be available from 26 September to 1 October 2016.

5. At the time of writing, only one Party had ratified the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products (the Protocol). Should the Protocol enter into force before COP7, the first

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1 See decision FCTC/COP5(20), available at http://www.who.int/fctc/publications
Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (MOP) would be held immediately after COP7 pursuant to Article 33 of the Protocol. It would be possible to hold the first MOP at WHO Headquarters in Geneva should there be no adequate availability at the CICG immediately after COP7, which would also allow some cost savings to be made, particularly on logistics expenses.

**Proposed duration of COP7 and cost implications**

6. The duration of a session of the COP has so far been 5.5 days, from Monday morning to Saturday lunchtime, with one exception: the first session of the COP lasted 10 days (from 6 to 17 February 2006). The sessions of the COP may benefit from an extended duration, which would enable the COP to adequately consider all agenda items. In this regard, the Bureau would like to recommend that the COP consider the two options described below and their respective financial and other implications.

7. Both options are based on the assumption that the session would be held at the seat of the Secretariat in Geneva, pursuant to Rule 4.2 of the Rules of Procedure, and also take into account the COP decision on harmonization of travel support available to Parties with that of WHO, whereby Parties that are least developed countries would be eligible for reimbursement of air ticket only.¹

**Option 1: to extend the session of the COP to 6 days (from Monday morning to Saturday afternoon)**

8. The session would close on Saturday afternoon instead of Saturday by noon as per current practice. The financial implications of this option would mainly concern additional costs for overtime to be paid to logistics and support staff (ushers, messengers, security personnel, documentation printing and distribution staff, IT technicians, cleaners, etc.) who would be required to work longer hours on that day. The applicable salary rate stipulated by WHO Staff Rules for work undertaken by a staff member of the General Service category after 19:00 on a weekday or on a Saturday morning until 12:00 is 150%, rising to 200% after 12:00 on Saturdays and on Sundays or official holidays.

9. The cost for payment of overtime to logistics and support staff that would be required should the session of the COP close at 18:00 (instead of noon) on the last day (Saturday) would amount to approximately US$ 23,000. The provision of interpretation services for an additional half day (one meeting) would cost approximately US$ 12,000.

10. The total additional cost for extending the session from the current 5.5 days to 6 days would therefore amount to US$ 35,000.

**Option 2: to schedule evening meetings during the current 5.5-day session**

11. This option would naturally provide more time for the deliberations of the COP. For example, four evening meetings could be scheduled (from Tuesday to Friday inclusive) during a 5.5-day session. This option would also allow participants to travel back home on the last day of the session, instead of the following day as would be the case with a 6-day session. On the other hand, this option might increase the pressure on both the participants and the Secretariat due to the long working hours. It should be noted that, due to budgetary constraints, the current budget

¹ See decision FCTC/COP5(18).
approved by the COP did not foresee evening sessions during COP6. Evening sessions were nevertheless made possible thanks to the generous financial contribution of the Russian Federation as part of its hosting arrangements.

12. The financial implications of scheduling evening meetings during a 5.5-day session would mainly relate to the costs of interpretation services, and payment of overtime for General Service staff during the additional meetings. Interpretation services for four evening sessions would amount to an additional cost of approximately US$ 15,000. Overtime to be paid to support staff for extended hours would amount to approximately US$ 55,000.

13. The total additional cost for scheduling four evening sessions during the current 5.5-day session would therefore amount to US$ 70,000.

Action by the Conference of the Parties

14. The COP is invited to decide on the date and duration of its seventh session, taking into account the proposed options and financial implications outlined above. Should the COP decide to extend the duration of the session, as described in options 1 and 2 above, the related additional costs would need to be included in the budget for the financial period 2016–2017.