



## European Commission prioritises tobacco, sacrifices global health in unhealthy trade negotiations with Latin America

Brussels, 17 May 2018. The European Public Health Alliance, along with Latin American and global partners, has written today to the EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström and First Vice-President Frans Timmermans to put health ahead of the interests of the tobacco industry in the EU's trade negotiations with Mexico, Chile and the Mercosur trade bloc (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay). Together with the global Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Healthy Latin America Coalition (CLAS), InterAmerican Heart Foundation and NCD Alliance we call on the EU to publicly change its stance, drop tobacco as an EU "Offensive Interest" in its negotiations with Mercosur and commit to exclude tobacco lobbyists from influencing policy positions on international trade.

This scandal is highlighted in EPHA's new report, *Unhealthy Trades*, along with eight other areas of trade with potentially crucial impacts on public health. The risk to public health is high, both for Europeans and for partner countries, particularly from lowered tariffs and standards and increased foreign direct investment in tobacco but also foods high in fat, salt and sugar, processed meat and alcohol, weak wording on food labelling, over-stringent intellectual property rights, weak support for the precautionary principle and inadequate and side-lined (sustainability) impact assessment processes.

Nina Renshaw, EPHA Secretary General, said *"By pushing tobacco interests in negotiations with Mercosur, the European Commission is betraying its own commitments and those of EU governments to the UN Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. This approach will burden our trading partners with chronic diseases, such as respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and cancers, and undermine their sustainable development. We have to call out Commissioner Malmström for damaging public health and sustainable development by prioritising the interests of the tobacco lobby."*

**By World No Tobacco Day, 31st May 2018** the signatories of the open letter call on the European Commission to:

- Publicly commit to kick tobacco lobbyists' influence out of all current and future EU trade negotiations
- Drop tobacco as an Offensive Interest in EU-Mercosur and never again identify it as such
- Strengthen the timely impact assessment of EU Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) by introducing a binding health impact assessment (HIA) and ensure all deals are amended on the basis of the findings of binding sustainability impact assessments' (SIAs).

We expect a positive response from the Commission in line with their longstanding international commitments to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and the Sustainable Development Goals – which the EU has championed. These steps are a necessary minimum to ensure that EU Trade policy does no harm to public health at home or around the world.

