

Sao Paulo, November 9th 2021

Brazil at risk at COP9

Brazil has a history of a successful tobacco control policy and is internationally recognized for the implementation of measures advocated by the international public health treaty, the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Brazil participated in all Conference of the Parties (COP) sessions held every two years. CONICQ (the National Commission for the Implementation of the FCTC) has always responsibly carried out its role of national and international articulation to support the advancement of FCTC measures, as well as of advising, discussing and preparing instructions for the official position of the Brazilian delegation at COPs.

This year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, for the first time, the COP is being held virtually. Also, for the first time, the Executive Secretariat of CONICQ was left out of the Brazilian delegation. The official list¹ released by the Secretariat differs from the participants list available at the COP9 App and at the Zoom sessions (the official platform of the event). The absence of representatives from the Executive Secretariat of CONICQ and other members on the 1st and 2nd days of COP9 is notable.

This risk was announced when a federal deputy questioned the legitimacy of CONICQ during an open preparatory meeting for COP9², which generated an immediate reaction from health organizations and gave rise to the manifesto in defense of CONICQ, signed by 77 Brazilian and international entities³.

Despite having publicly assured that the role of CONICQ was preserved on several occasions, the absence of representatives of the collegiate suggests that the Minister of Health seems to have given in to the pressure of interests from the tobacco production sector. Even though it is a public health Convention, the federal government seems to have chosen to make CONICQ's work invisible, which compromises the country's image and its leadership position built over the course of 15 years since the ratification of the WHO FCTC.

Even though there has always been pressure in previous years, we had never reached this point, with the exclusion of the main representative of CONICQ, Executive Secretary Dr Tania Cavalcante, who was even awarded, in 2021, by the WHO for her dedication and excellence in the work carried out on tobacco control in the country. By excluding CONICQ members from the official Brazilian delegation, the collegiate body is being prevented from fulfilling its role in defense of public health and the prevention of smoking. This is particularly serious, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, when we need to strengthen government agencies responsible for articulating and promoting health measures.

CONICQ must urgently take its place with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to have a voice and to be able to vote at COP9 and MOP2 international meetings, and Brazil needs to reiterate its commitment by fully applying article 5.3 of the treaty, which alerts member countries to the need to preserve the government from the undue interference of the tobacco industry.

ACT Health Promotion

¹ https://untobaccocontrol.org/downloads/cop9/additional-documents/FCTC_COP9_DIV1_EN.pdf

² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGM8dH90jgc&t=4833s&ab_channel=InstitutoNacionaldeC%C3%A2ncer

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<https://actbr.org.br/post/manifesto-pela-imediata-reconstituicao-formal-da-comissao-nacional-para-implementacao-da-convencaoquadro-para-controle-do-tabaco-pelo-governo-federal-brasileiro/19102/>