

To the National Senators and Representatives

Honorable Congress of the Argentine Nation

Dear Sirs and Madams,

We are sending this letter to express our concern regarding the delay in the ratification of the FCTC of the World Health Organization (WHO) and to request an interview with you to discuss this issue.

Tobacco is the leading cause of morbi-mortality in Argentina and worldwide. Its consumption leads to respiratory and cardiovascular disease, as well as cancer, causing the loss of 800,000 otherwise healthy Argentine lives every year. About 30% of the country's adult population is smokers and over 40,000 deaths occur every year as a direct consequence of tobacco consumption. This fact also implies very high financial costs in terms of medical treatment for tobacco-related illness, estimated at 7 billion pesos each year.

Exposure to second-hand smoke (SHS) has been proven to cause illness and death among non-smokers, increasing the risk of suffering myocardial infarction, lung and breast cancer, respiratory disease, etc. Exposure to SHS is estimated to cause 6,000 deaths every year among non-smokers.

-that the tobacco industry has blocked every tobacco control bill in the Argentine Congress over the past 30 years.

The 56th World Assembly of the World Health Organization (WHO) passed by unanimous vote the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC-WHO) on May 21st 2003, which provides an international legal framework for tobacco control and constitutes an effective and low-cost solution to reduce illness, deaths, environmental damage, and economical loss caused by tobacco use. To this day, the FCTC has been ratified by 168 countries.

Argentina signed this Convention in 2003, but to this day it is the only country in the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), and one of the few countries in the world that has still not ratified the FCTC-WHO.

The ratification of FCTC will not have a negative impact on tobacco farmers who export 85% of the tobacco produce. In fact, most of the largest tobacco producers in the world have ratified the Convention (China, Brazil, India, etc.).

The ratification of the Framework Convention before August 2010 will allow Argentina to fully participate in the 4th Conference of the Parties that will be held in November 2010 in Uruguay. The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the directive organ of the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (WHO) and it comprises all countries that have ratified the Convention.

Argentina has approximately 8 million smokers and the trends indicate that half of them (4 million) will die for this cause. We hereby appeal to your sense of justice in defense of thousands of people who suffer from tobacco-related diseases.

The Coalition that we represent includes multiple health and medical institutions, but also organizations of patients and people that suffer tobacco-related disease.

Thus, we hereby request your collaboration to promote the ratification of the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC-WHO), with the purpose of stopping this serious epidemic.

Thank you for your kind attention regarding this matter,

Sincerely,