

**FCTC**WHO FRAMEWORK CONVENTION
ON TOBACCO CONTROL**Conference of the Parties to the
WHO Framework Convention
on Tobacco Control****Sixth session****Moscow, Russian Federation, 13–18 October 2014****Agenda item 3****FCTC/COP/6/DIV/3****14 October 2014**

**Address by Dr Vera da Costa e Silva, Head of the
Convention Secretariat****13 October 2014**

President of the Conference of the Parties,

Ministers, delegates, colleagues, friends, my family:

It is my distinct pleasure to be here with you today, at the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and my first session as Head of the Convention Secretariat. It has been almost four months since I began my tenure – busy days, culminating in being here. Your support and encouragement in these last months have been invaluable. Thank you.

I would like to extend particular thanks to the Government of the Russian Federation for hosting COP6 and for being an example of a Party to the treaty that, by implementing its provisions, makes the difference for the health of its people. Their cooperation and collaboration with the Convention Secretariat in planning and organizing this session have been exemplary.

In the next few minutes, I have the opportunity to report on Convention Secretariat activities and progress made in the past biennium. However, before I begin, I wish to extend my thanks to my predecessor and colleague, Haik Nikogosian, for his dedicated work as the Head of the Convention Secretariat for the last seven years. His leadership brought us through the negotiations of the Convention's first protocol, among other successes, and I would like to offer him my own personal thanks as well as the thanks of us all.

The last two years have seen some notable achievements.

The Convention Secretariat has conducted 16 needs assessments, working closely with Party governments to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges in implementation of the WHO FCTC. Now, we have the information we need to start closing the gaps and to learn from best practices. Thank you to Parties and donors who made this exercise possible.

As you will recall, COP5 established an open-ended intersessional drafting group to continue the work of developing guidelines for implementation of Article 6, and to present a complete draft for consideration at COP6. These guidelines are before you now. They are evidence-based and provide robust guidance for implementing this key provision.

We received reports from 130 Parties in the 2014 reporting cycle. They show that measurable improvements have been achieved in a number of areas of implementation, not least in relation to Article 5.3. In the last two years, some Parties have included provisions protecting public health policy-making from tobacco industry interference as part of comprehensive tobacco control legislation. Others are planning to do the same. Nevertheless, while the reports currently provide useful data, because reporting on country-level work on the WHO FCTC is a critical part of successful implementation, we constantly strive to improve this process. In this regard, provisions establishing a mechanism to facilitate review of Parties reports are on the agenda for your consideration and action.

The Convention Secretariat also convened 2 meetings of Party-nominated experts to consider Article 19 on liability. Their report is before you for consideration. It seems clear that this is an area that needs further exploration and consideration, as it holds the potential to be a key aspect of our work.

I am particularly happy to report to you that we now have 4 Parties to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products: Nicaragua, Uruguay, Gabon and – just last week – Mongolia. This is 10% of what is needed for the Protocol to enter into force. I am making it one of the chief priorities of the Convention Secretariat to see the entry into force of the Protocol before COP7. We will be focused on raising awareness in all sectors of Governments. We will also provide technical support to WHO FCTC Parties to ratify, accept, approve, formally confirm or accede to the Protocol so that we can reach our 40 Parties goal. We cannot lose momentum – a Protocol that hasn't entered into force is simply an impressive document. We need to transform it into binding law, to give Parties the tools they need to bring illicit trade to a halt.

As you will recall, in 2013 the World Health Assembly endorsed a global target of a 30% relative reduction in prevalence of current tobacco use in persons 15 years and older by 2025. The WHO FCTC is the key to achieving this – in other words, we will not reach this ambitious and critical target without concerted effort by all Parties to fully implement the Convention. Working with WHO at all of its levels to ensure this global public health success is another of the chief priorities of the Convention Secretariat in the coming years.

I want to echo the Director-General's strong reminder this morning. We have never seen the tobacco industry so focused on interfering with Parties' implementation of the Convention, requiring ever more vigilance on our part. They have become bolder in the last decade, interfering at the national and supranational levels, behind closed doors and in the open, which is a sign, that the laws and policies being adopted are effective.

We have the tools we need to stop this kind of industry-driven meddling in Government. Article 5.3 gives all Parties the legal mandate to protect their public health policy-making from tobacco industry interference.

While continuing to protect and grow their markets, the tobacco industry has also carefully and intentionally engaged in efforts to develop new products, including acquisition of electronic nicotine delivery system companies, bringing these products under the umbrella of their control. As a product of the tobacco industry, the future potential of electronic nicotine delivery system in tobacco control risks being tainted, bringing to mind past industry questionable solutions like filters and low tar tobacco. Evidence is just emerging to assist us in making informed, evidence-based decisions on where electronic nicotine delivery system will fit in. And we have no reason to think that electronic nicotine delivery system are the last of the line. Novel and emerging products are likely to continue to appear. In this vein, you will also consider reports on smokeless tobacco and water pipe usage.

Coming from a tobacco growing country, I can testify as to how the industry misinforms and uses farmers to justify their attacks against sound tobacco control measures. This industry tactic creates additional layers of complexity for Parties implementing demand-reduction provisions and, additionally, in developing strategies that support the identification of alternative livelihoods and measures to protect the environment. Tobacco farmers are the most vulnerable members of the tobacco chain, often experiencing health harms from their work with raw tobacco and economic hardships from unfair employment arrangements. To protect them, it is essential that the agricultural, agrarian development and labour sectors be protagonists in any comprehensive tobacco control programme. Policy options and recommendations for Articles 17 & 18 are also submitted for the consideration of COP6.

As we move into the second decade of the WHO Framework Convention, I would like to ask that we all remember the most vulnerable populations. Due to industry targeting, social context and simple life circumstances, women, children and the poor are the most likely to suffer from the impact of tobacco-related diseases. We have long known that tobacco control is a necessary part of strong development. To protect the most vulnerable and promote sustainable changes, we need to reach across sectors, working in a whole-of-government, health-in-all policies approach to reduce the health and social burdens related to tobacco use.

This is an exciting, if complex time in global public health. There are many competing priorities, but I am strongly encouraged by recent announcements of “tobacco end games” from high profile champions, particularly those from countries where the tobacco epidemic is declining. We have some Parties who are giving life to our often repeated mantra of the WHO FCTC being a floor, not a ceiling – they push their policies to the highest levels.

And at the same time, we are a community. Our successes are measured and define our willingness to make this kind of achievement possible for all Parties. Now is the time to increase WHO FCTC implementation cooperation of every kind, at every level, to enhance learning and opportunities.

However, these are also sobering times financially. We are all, whether in our households, our Governments or our organizations, being asked to do more with less. To realistically reach our laudable, but also very ambitious goals with this treaty and its Protocol, partnership, coordination and collaboration must be the core operating values of the Convention Secretariat. I have spoken with our colleagues at all levels of WHO, and they stand ready to support our work, and invite us to support theirs. Together, we make a powerful team, with complementary skills and mandates.

As I close today, I want to take a moment to emphasize the inclusiveness of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. The Convention could not have been as successful as it has been, either in its negotiation or its implementation, if we had not been working hand-in-hand with our colleagues and partners. Civil society and our sister United Nations agencies are critical and principal members of the community that makes the treaty a success. The Convention Secretariat will be actively reaching out to enhance and increase our cooperation with all friends of the treaty.

I have been fortunate enough to have seen many of you, in preparation for this session. We have a full agenda, in matters of both substance and procedure. We know that COP days are long and ask a great deal of all of us, but they are also some of the most rewarding days of the biennium. I look forward to working with all of you this week.

Thank you.

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