

## Brazilians Step Up Actions Against Smoking

Contributed by Flávia Albuquerque  
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On World Tobacco-Free Day, commemorated today, Brazil's Minister of Health, Humberto Costa, handed the president of the Senate, Renan Calheiros, a letter containing 13,500 signatures asking the senators for rapid approval of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Framework Convention for Tobacco Control.

This is the first international public health treaty ever, intended to reduce worldwide cigarette consumption.

"I request the senators to support and participate actively in the ratification of the Framework Convention, reaffirming the commitment to protect and preserve the health of our society, seeking to guarantee the Brazilian people the right to quality of life and the country, the necessary conditions for social and economic advances," says a passage of the text.

The Convention was approved by the Chamber of Deputies in May, 2004, and has been stalled for a year in the Federal Senate.

The Ministry of Health distributed booklets to the senators debunking the idea that approval of the treaty might be detrimental to Brazilian tobacco growers. This is the main argument espoused by the tobacco industry, which opposes the treaty.

The São Paulo Society of Clinical Oncology (SPOC), for its part, intends to gather a million signatures on a petition calling for Senate approval of the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control.

Volunteers asked the population for its support today during the 1st Anti-Tobacco, Pro-Life Walk, in São Paulo.

Demonstrators walked to the Consolation Cemetery, where prayers were said in memory of the 200 thousand Brazilians who die each year from tobacco-related diseases.

Worldwide, the number of annual deaths amounts to five million. The Brazil United Against Tobacco campaign was launched, as well, with plans to place outdoor signs in various spots around the city of São Paulo.

According to the president of the SPOC, Nise Yamaguchi, the signatures will be gathered during the month of June in various states and will be sent to Congress in July.

The international treaty envisions a reduction in the demand for tobacco, a reduction in the offer of tobacco products, protection of the environment, civil responsibility, and technical cooperation.

The chief measures will be: an increase in tobacco prices and taxes, elimination of the black market, and the preparation of national studies on tobacco and its impact on public health.

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