

The Union

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Union Celebrates 15th Anniversary of the FCTC

José Luis Castro discusses key accomplishments, new challenges in tobacco epidemic

Thursday 5 March 2020 (Geneva, Switzerland)—The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) is pleased to be attending today's celebrations of the 15th anniversary of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The FCTC is the only international treaty negotiated by the World Health Organization (WHO); today it includes 181 parties and covers over 90 per cent of the global population.

The high-level celebration is chaired by H.E. Esmail Baghaei Hamaneh, President of the Conference of the Parties, and convenes key stakeholders from the United Nations, WHO, and INGO partners committed to fighting the global tobacco epidemic.

"I am delighted to be in Geneva at this momentous occasion," said José Luis Castro, Executive Director of The Union. "The Convention is well-worthy of celebration. It is a powerful instrument to protect populations against lethal products that destroy health, devastate families, and debilitate economies."

The FCTC was opened for signature in 2003 when the world was at a pivotal moment:

- Tobacco claimed 100 million deaths in the 20th century
- The epidemic showed no signs of abatement and was on course to produce 1 billion deaths in the 21st century if action was not taken
- Low and middle income countries like Mexico, the Philippines, Georgia, and Ukraine were deliberately being targeted by the tobacco industry.

In its fifteen years, the FCTC has produced significant public health results. Smoking bans in public places now protect 1.5 billion people, and more than 122 countries require pictorial health warnings on tobacco products.

There is much more to be done, particularly in the low- and middle- income countries, which are home to more than 80% of the world's smokers.

"The tobacco industry is relentless," said Dr Gan Quan, Director of The Union's tobacco control department, who cautioned against complacency. "It simply cannot be trusted, which is why the FCTC's Article 5.3, which warns against industry interference, is as important today as it was when the Convention was first implemented."

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About the [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease \(The Union\)](#)

The Union was founded in 1920 and is the world's first global health organisation. We are a global leader in ending TB, we fight the tobacco industry, and we solve key problems in treating major diseases. We use science to design the best treatments and policies for the most pressing public health challenges affecting people living in poverty around the world. The Union's members, staff and consultants operate in more than 140 countries and embody our core values of accountability, independence, quality and solidarity.

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