
BRAZIL TO BECOME WORLD'S LARGEST SMOKE-FREE COUNTRY

Washington, D.C., 15 December, 2011 (PAHO/WHO) — The Government of Brazil today enacted a new law that protects the health of its more than 190 million inhabitants by prohibiting smoking in all enclosed collective-use spaces—both public and private. Signed by President Dilma Rousseff, the new law makes Brazil the largest country in the world to declare all workplaces and indoor public spaces 100 percent smoke-free.

With this historic action, Brazil becomes the 14th country in the Americas to become smoke-free since 2005. Uruguay, Colombia, Panama, Guatemala, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Argentina, Peru, Honduras, Venezuela, Ecuador and El Salvador have also done this through national laws, while Canada has enacted sub-national legislation that protects 90 percent of its population.

“Tobacco consumption is the main contributor to heart attacks, stroke, cancers and other chronic diseases that are now epidemic throughout our hemisphere,” said PAHO Director Dr. Mirta Roses. “Our countries are increasingly recognizing that tobacco control is a matter of life and death.”

In addition to banning smoking in all enclosed collective-use spaces, the law also prohibits tobacco advertising at the point of sale, raises taxes on tobacco products, and increases the required size of health warnings that must be included on both sides of cigarette packages. More than 17 percent of adults in Brazil smoke, and an estimated 200,000 Brazilians die each year as a result of tobacco use. Tobacco use is also associated with 45 percent of fatal heart attacks, 85 percent of deaths due to pulmonary emphysema, and 30 percent of cancer deaths.

Measures such as those established in Brazil’s new legislation fall within the World Health Organization’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), the first international public health treaty that requires its States Parties to apply a series

of policies and measures to reduce tobacco consumption and to protect their populations from exposure to secondhand smoke. The treaty has been in force since 2005.

The FCTC recommends six measures that scientific evidence shows are the most effective for reducing tobacco demand:

- Require graphic health warnings that cover large parts of tobacco packages
- Monitor the consumption of tobacco products
- Protect the population from exposure to secondhand smoke
- Offer help to those who wish to stop smoking
- Enforce bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship
- Increase taxes on tobacco products.

Each year, tobacco kills nearly 6 million people around the world, as a result of both direct consumption and exposure to secondhand smoke. At least 1 million of these deaths occur in the Americas. Tobacco use is a risk factor for six of the eight leading causes of death worldwide, and tobacco is the only legal product that kills from one-third to half of its consumers when used exactly as intended by the manufacturer.

For more information, please contact:

Leticia Linn, linnl@paho.org, Media Relations, Area of Knowledge Management and Communication.

World Health Organization. Brazil to become world's largest smoke-free country [Internet]. Geneva: WHO; 2012 [cited 2012; Mar 26]. Available from: http://new.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6274&Itemid=1926&lang=en.