

# COP8News

DAY 5

## Today at the FCA Bulletin - Day 5

The Secretariat has been tasked with preparing a revised 2020-21 workplan and budget to be presented this morning, in response to Parties' inflexible request for zero budget increase for the next biennium.

In low and middle-income countries, where the number of smokers is growing, the offer of smoking cessation support might be one way to get buy-in from citizens to implement smoke-free laws and other tobacco control measures.

Getting a report on the relevant science and regulatory options behind Heated Tobacco Products for COP9 is advisable and should be a pre-requisite for further policy recommendations.

The next Governing Board of the ILO will debate and decide on its collaboration with the Tobacco industry. It is hoped that the ILO will finally cut ties with the tobacco industry. A new analysis shows that profits from the world's largest tobacco companies go almost exclusively to shareholders in a handful of the world's wealthiest countries.

It is time that African Parties begin to see tobacco taxation as an opportunity.



## Why should the FCTC and the COP meetings cost us money?

One of the main takes out of this 8<sup>th</sup> COP meeting is how much I have learnt about accounting. It is very important to understand the contributions of the FCTC to its ratifying members and parties in order to also understand its increasing and demanding requirements in terms of funding. This is an analysis that requires going back to the Treaty's history and see what the deliveries are in terms of policies and what conclusions member countries can take from these deliveries. The truth is that budget has always been an issue and it is not very difficult to figure out how much this whole machinery of the FCTC Secretariat and its tentacles, can cost. In my experience attending COPs (this is my 5<sup>th</sup>) I have never felt, by reading the COP literature, as much pressure on the funding demand from the FCTC Secretariat to their ratifying members and parties as in this one. As someone would say in my country "friends are friends but businesses apart" The funding issue has been escalating during the week and the tone used to raise it, too. At the beginning of the week there was this recognition of the efforts made by the Secretariat to advance global policies on tobacco prevention illnesses. The content of their publications invited everybody to participate on

the budget with their contributions. There was, by then, this sense of unity and positiveness. As the week went by, the Secretariat started giving some numbers about what they calculated was their budget deficit. The accounts did not work for me, but again, I am not an accountant. However, as the FCTC Secretariat pictured it, according to a study they have conducted, in order to fully implement the WHO FCTC policies there is a gap of resources estimated to be 27.4 billion dollars (!!). In exchange, the WHO FCTC claims to provide a huge opportunity to shift gears in the tobacco control framework at national and global level by providing parties with a *'clear outcome-oriented plan'*

On day 4 a global strategy for tobacco control was endorsed and that was consider a huge step that would help the COP, the Secretariat and individual Parties to raise funds. But discussion on budget were still to come and by day 5<sup>th</sup> of the Conference, the 'Clock was ticking' and it was time to get serious about the COP budget, as the FCA put it. By now, uncertainty wandered around the meetings as the Secretariat was trying to figure out how the plans would go forward without funding. According to the Secretariat, parties have been 'inflexible' about biennium increases of the budget. Maybe parties did not understand that this whole thing comes at a cost and this is not a cheap one for sure. But the implementation of the Convention is at risk because there is not agreement on the issue between the FCTC and the parties.

It is clear, and everyone can sense this by reading today's bulletin, that the FCTC fears the lack of resources to implement its already very poor, global strategy. In this sense, it urges Delegates to focus, in these last crucial hours to prioritise discussions. We would expect these discussions, after more than 10 years to already overcome the theory phase and to go into practical *'in situ'* projects, especially in article 17&18 where diversification has been promoted all these years without a single pilot project in place. Contrary to our expectations, the advice goes to Delegates to keep their 'karma' in order to come out with solutions to fulfil the budget requirements.

According to FCA bulletin, day 5, contributions from major EU countries have decreased by US\$985,000. I personally went to see how much my country was contributing this year to the treaty and the amount goes to US\$330,000. But taking it from a strong tobacco growing country perspective, as it is the case of Brazil, I am very curious to find out if our Brazilian growers know that their country is one of the few that increased their contribution from around 200,000 dollars in 2006/7 to 433,000 this year.

Luk Joonsens from the Association of European Cancer League, learnt two lessons from this COP8 (as he confirmed it in this 5<sup>th</sup> FCA bulletin):

1. The Secretariat should be more sensitive to the legitimate concerns, and repeated request of the Parties regarding the transparency of budget (...);
2. The policy of zero nominal increase and the decrease of contributions will lead to an FCTC with not future

I have learnt one:

1. The Convention is struggling with funding issues and maybe the parties are asking themselves where all the money put into the FCTC's bucket along these 12 years of treaty, have gone.

Maybe we should all ask ourselves: why should we all pay for the FCTC implementation when no help is allocated, whatsoever, to tobacco growers to diversify along tobacco?

Mercedes Vázquez - ITGA PR officer