

**To champion the prevention,
diagnosis, and treatment of chest
diseases through education,
communication, and research.**

February 15, 2016

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Dear Mr. President,

Addiction to tobacco is the largest preventable cause of death and disability worldwide, expected to cause one billion deaths this century. In addition, passive smoking is estimated to cause over 600,000 deaths annually, 150,000 of which are among children.

These staggering numbers can only be prevented by a global consensus on the protection of public health from tobacco use. A supranational coordination for the solution to the problem is the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control of the World Health Organization (FCTC, WHO). The FCTC is an evidence-based treaty reaffirming the right of all people to the highest standard of health. **As stated in its preamble, it seeks "to protect present and future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke" by enacting a set of universal standards stating the dangers of tobacco and limiting its use in all forms worldwide.** To this end, the treaty's provisions include rules that govern the production, sale, distribution, advertisement, and taxation of tobacco.

The FCTC was adopted as the first global treaty negotiated under the auspices of the WHO by the World Health Assembly in May 2003, entered into force in February 2005, and very soon became one of the most rapidly and widely embraced treaties in the history of the United Nations. Currently, the FCTC has been ratified by 180 countries, corresponding to more than 80% of the world population. Only seven countries, the most prominent of which being the United States of America, have signed but not yet ratified the treaty. Interestingly, the USA played an active role in the long preparatory phase and the signing of the treaty in May 2004 but has not yet ratified the FCTC.

Within the past six Conferences of the Parties (COP) of FCTC, the absence of the USA as an active member results as following:

- The leading role of the USA is absent from the most important efforts of the United Nations toward the protection of public health.
- In the decision-making process of the FCTC, the most powerful nation in the world is silent.
- The excellent national actions to curb the tobacco epidemic in the USA fail to be transferred to the global level.

As an ambassador for the protection of human rights at a global level, the USA's leadership is needed to ensure implementation worldwide of FCTC articles for the protection of children, women, and other vulnerable populations.

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We are reaching out to you on behalf of the American College of Chest Physicians (CHEST). With more than 19,000 members representing 100+ countries around the world, CHEST is the global leader in advancing best patient outcomes through innovative chest medicine education, clinical research, and team-based care. Our mission is to champion the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of chest diseases through education, communication, and research. Over our 80+ years in existence, CHEST has been active on a global level raising awareness about the dangers of tobacco use and the importance of lung health. We were one of the first medical organizations to recognize the dangers of cigarette smoking and were instrumental in helping pass legislation requiring printing the Surgeon General's warning on cigarette packages. We were also instrumental in the passage of legislation banning smoking on domestic flights.

In light of the above, as a board member and as a board chair and President of CHEST, we feel it is our duty to urge the First Citizen of the strongest nation in the world to take the historic decision of addressing the largest preventable threat to human health and to ratify the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Respectfully,



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