Ref No: SQ16-000018

OUTCOME: 1 - Population Health

Topic: Sixth Conference of the Parties Meeting in Moscow in 2014

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Canavan, Matthew

Question:

a) Can the Department confirm media reports that media representatives were ejected from the COP 6 meeting held in Moscow from 13 to 18 October, 2014 and then banned from covering its deliberations and proceedings?
b) Did the Australian delegation lead the push to remove the public from observing the proceedings of the Conference by being the first country to move a resolution at COP 6 to this effect?
c) What was the reason for excluding both the media and the public from observing the Conference's proceedings and what evidence existed to necessitate such action?
d) Can the Department confirm that one of the first decisions adopted at COP 6 related to tobacco tax and pricing measures? If so, why was no one from the Australian Treasury present?
e) Did anyone on the Health delegation or anyone supporting the delegation in the Health Department have any expertise in the design of tax policy?
f) Did Treasury have any input on how decisions were made on tax policies at COP 6?
g) When was Treasury told about the decisions that took place on tax policies at COP 6? For example, was Treasury informed of the Health delegation's decision prior to it being made on the Conference floor?
h) Is it true that a decision was made at the COP 6 Conference regarding trade and investment?
i) Did anyone on the COP 6 Health delegation or anyone supporting the delegation in the Health Department have any expertise in trade policy?
j) Did the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade have any input on how decisions by the Health delegation were made on trade and investment policies at COP 6?
k) When was the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade told about the decisions that took place on trade policies at COP 6?

Answer:

a) Please refer to paragraphs 161-167 of the Report of the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) (available at www.who.int/fctc/cop/sessions/cop6/en/), regarding agenda item 6.7: Participation of members of the public in sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies.

COP6 agreed at its first plenary meeting to exclude the general public from its meetings in view of the need to prevent the tobacco industry from exerting influence over its proceedings (in accordance with Article 5.3 of the FCTC). Media are considered as members of the public, and were not permitted to participate in meetings (paragraph 164 of the report of the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO FCTC). The Head of the Convention Secretariat held daily press briefings to facilitate coverage of the deliberations and proceedings of COP6 in this context.

b) Refer to paragraph 161 of the Report of the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO FCTC.

c) Refer to paragraphs 161-167 of the Report of the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO FCTC.

d) COP6 decided 2014 to adopt the Guidelines for implementation of Article 6 of the WHO FCTC: Price and tax measures to reduce the demand for tobacco. The Guidelines were developed between 2010 and 2014, with full participation of the Australian Government, including Treasury officials who were consulted in relation to Australia's position in support of adoption of the Guidelines at COP6.

e) The delegation and the Department of Health were informed and supported by Australian Treasury officials.

f) See part d) above.

g) See part d) above.

h) Yes.

i) to k)
The delegation included a Counsellor from Australia's Permanent Mission to the World Trade Organization in Geneva. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade was also represented on the delegation, and supported and informed its decisions.