Brazil’s health minister tests COVID positive at United Nations

Brazil's Health Minister Marcelo Queiroga tested positive for coronavirus after attending the United Nations General Assembly in New York [File: Adriano Machado/Reuters]

New York, September 22 (RHC)-- Brazil’s Health Minister Marcelo Queiroga has tested positive for COVID-19 after attending the United Nations General Assembly in New York, where Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was the first world leader to speak.

The Brazilian government said on Tuesday that Queiroga, who had received a COVID-19 vaccine, was the second member of Bolsonaro’s entourage to test positive for the virus since arriving in New York for

the 76th session of the annual UN gathering.

Queiroga was with Bolsonaro, who last year survived a bout of the virus, at several events, including a meeting with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday. “The other members of the delegation have been tested and are negative,” an official Brazilian government press release read. It added that Queiroga was “doing well.”

Bolsonaro, who is unvaccinated but has maintained he still has antibodies from an earlier coronavirus infection, had chafed at calls for UN officials to require proof of vaccination to attend the event in person. The UN later announced it would use an “honour system” for vaccinations, and would not bar those who are unvaccinated from entering.

Local New York officials, meanwhile, have voiced concerns over the UNGA becoming a super spreader event as the Delta variant continues to spread in the United States. New York City requires proof of vaccination at some indoor locations – including restaurants, gyms and entertainment venues.

The Brazilian president, who has maintained he will be “the last” citizen of his country to be vaccinated, caused a stir on social media on Sunday after a photograph showed him eating a slice of pizza on a New York street surrounded by several of his ministers.

The health minister was the only one in the photo wearing a mask, but he had pulled it down under his chin. During his speech on Tuesday, Bolsonaro said he supported vaccinations but opposed mandates. He also criticised coronavirus restrictions that harm the economy.

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