



Global Alcohol Policy Conference

“Mobilising for Change: Alcohol Policy and the Evidence for Action”
Melbourne, Australia, 4-6 October 2015

COMMUNIQUE

We, the participants of the fifth Global Alcohol Policy Conference "Mobilizing for Change: Alcohol Policy and the Evidence for Action", gathered in Melbourne, Australia on October 4-6, 2017, to reaffirm our commitment to evidence-based actions to reduce alcohol harm worldwide.

We recognize that alcohol harm is growing throughout much of the world, and that alcohol consumption causes 3.3 million deaths per year, is the seventh leading cause of death and disability worldwide, and is the leading cause of death and disability for young people ages 15 to 49. A combination of aggressive alcohol industry activities in a context of economic agreements prioritising corporate power, weak national alcohol policies, lack of regulatory and enforcement capacity, and insufficient political will has contributed to a more than 25% increase in years of life lost to death and disability caused by alcohol since 1990. Alcohol's causal contribution to many diseases, injuries and social problems, including widespread harms like alcohol-caused cancers and alcohol-related birth defects, is often not recognized, while many countries lack the capacity to track alcohol consumption and harms, and the funding needed to facilitate civil society's response to the harm.

Opportunities exist for progress in turning the tide of this public health epidemic. WHO is a key contributor and the organisation's work in this area needs to be strengthened to levels commensurate with alcohol's role in the global burden of disease. There are new possibilities for coalition-building across the key risk factors in non-communicable diseases, particularly since all face corporate drivers of ill health, and corporate takeover of global governance and democratic processes at the national level. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide important opportunities to make apparent that implementation of effective alcohol policy will contribute to many of the SDGs. National and regional alcohol policy alliances, and the transferring of successes from one country or region to another, are increasing. As evidence grows of alcohol industry efforts to block, delay or deflect effective measures, engagement of civil society at all levels and encouragement of community-based initiatives are critical to turning positive public opinion into political will for change.

We call for a re-invigorated global response to alcohol harm, based on the growing body of evidence of effective approaches, and informed by the knowledge and documentation of the anti-public health tactics of the global alcohol producers, marketers and retailers, and the threats from economic agreements and alcohol marketing in an increasingly digital world. We envision a world that will be healthier, safer, fairer, greener and happier when effective alcohol policies are promulgated, implemented and enforced.

Central to this vision is the development of a global binding, legal framework on alcohol harm, accompanied by a global civil society monitoring mechanism sufficiently skilled and resourced to hold Member States to their commitments. We call for the inclusion of and support for healthy and effective alcohol policies in the work of regional frameworks and networks for action, such as trade blocs and other organizations of regional cooperation. Similarly, we call for trade agreements to permit and facilitate healthy alcohol policies.

We call for consistent implementation of effective policies at all levels – local/municipal, state, regional, national and global. To maintain and routinize a global focus on the importance of alcohol as a factor in global death and disability, we call for a World No Alcohol Day.

Recognizing the hundreds of millions of lives that are every year negatively affected by alcohol, we commit to working to integrate alcohol policy and an alcohol focus into larger social movements for health, environmental preservation, social justice, and equality, building together the kind of world that the majority of the world's people desires and deserves.