

Joint Open Letter

To:

*Hon. Mrs Aida Kurtovic, Chair of the Board
Hon. Mr Peter Sands, Incoming Executive Director
Hon. Mrs Marijke Wijnroks, Interim Executive Director*

*The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
Chemin de Blandonnet 8
1214 Vernier
Geneva, Switzerland*

1 February 2018

Dear Mrs Kurtovic, Mr Sands and Mrs Wijnroks,

It is with tremendous appreciation and respect for the work and mission of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria that we write to you today to voice our deep concern with the newly announced partnership with Heineken, and to respectfully urge you to immediately end this partnership.

The era of sustainable development should be all about partnerships; to address cross-cutting drivers and determinants of ill-health and poverty, to mobilize resources, to unlock synergies across sectors, and to galvanize truly sustainable efforts to implement evidence-based good practice for transformational change.

We understand the need to seek new financing mechanisms for global health and see the apparent benefits of building on the logistics developed by commercial enterprises. However, we respectfully point out the dangers inherent in partnerships with the producers and marketers of hazardous products such as alcohol.

Alcohol and the TB and AIDS epidemics

In November 2017, global leaders adopted the Moscow Declaration to end TB. With the declaration Member States commit themselves to *"Achieving synergies in managing TB, co-infections and relevant noncommunicable diseases, undernutrition, mental health and harmful use of alcohol and other substance abuse, including drug injection.¹"*

In the landmark "Blind Spot" report "Reaching out to men and boys" from November 2017, UNAIDS writes that *"[...] harmful use of alcohol increases risk to a range of communicable and*

¹ Moscow Declaration to End TB, adopted at the First WHO Global Ministerial Conference "Ending TB in the Sustainable Development Era: a multisectoral response" November 16-17, 2017, accessed online January 30, 2018
http://www.who.int/tb/features_archive/Moscow_Declaration_to_End_TB_final_ENGLISH.pdf?ua=1

noncommunicable diseases, including HIV. Heavy [alcohol use] has also been shown to increase the progression of disease within people living with HIV².”

“Modelling studies have suggested that [...] structural interventions—such as those that increase the price of alcohol, restrict the marketing of alcohol and reduce its availability—can reduce alcohol consumption and lower rates of sexually transmitted infections.”

Alcohol is a major risk factor for both TB³ and HIV/AIDS⁴, and it is increasingly recommended that alcohol policy best buy interventions¹ be part of the responses to both epidemics.

Alcohol – a major obstacle to sustainable development

Evidence shows that alcohol adversely affects achievement of 13 of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including poverty eradication, health for all, gender equality, economic prosperity, sustainable consumption, ending violence and building safer and resilient cities⁵. Therefore, target 3.5 of the SDGs commits governments to “Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.”

Significant progress on alcohol policy will be necessary to achieve this and other SDG targets, including targets 3.3 and 3.4 to end the epidemic of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria and to reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by a third by 2030.

Conflict of Interest

Partnerships with the alcohol industry are laden with inherent conflicts of interest. Transnational corporations producing and aggressively marketing alcohol rely on the harmful use of alcohol for their sales and profits. In South Africa for example, a recent research study showed 90% of alcohol was consumed in harmful alcohol use occasions.⁶ This underpins the conflict of interest, which leads companies such as Heineken to undermine and subvert evidence-based alcohol policy implementation at the same time as they expand distribution networks and marketing to grow their market in low-and middle-income countries.

A partnership such as this with the Global Fund is of great value to Heineken. It redirects attention from the costs of harmful use of alcohol and positions Heineken to governments, the public and the global community as a legitimate partner in implementing sustainable development solutions, while

² The Blind Spot. Reaching out to men and boys. Addressing a blind spot in the response to HIV, UNAIDS/JC2911E, 2017, accessed online January 30, 2018 http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/blind_spot_en.pdf

³ Imtiaz S, Shield KD, Roerecke M, et al. Alcohol consumption as a risk factor for tuberculosis: meta-analyses and burden of disease. *Eur Respir J* 2017; 50: 1700216 [https://doi.org/10.1183/13993003.00216-2017].

⁴ Fact sheet, World Health Organization, 2015, accessed online January 30, 2018 <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs349/en/>

⁵ Fact sheet, IOGT International, 2017, accessed online January 30, 2018 http://iogt.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Alcohol-and-SDGs_new.pdf

⁶ Cuong, P.V., Casswell, S. Parker, K. et al. (2018) Cross-country comparison of proportion of alcohol consumed in harmful drinking occasions using the International Alcohol Control Study. Forthcoming, *Drug and Alcohol Review*.

at the same time their lobbying organizations was actively working to prevent implementation of effective alcohol policies⁷.

Indeed, it clearly states on the Global Fund's website that "the broad range of private partners engaging with the Global Fund understand that investing in health equals investing in markets, people and the long-term profitability of their businesses. Partnering with the Global Fund also brings visibility, recognition and opportunities to further develop businesses."

This suggests that the Fund is aware of how the new partnership with Heineken helps give the company visibility, brand recognition and opportunities to further grow its business across Africa.

The Global Fund has previously attempted to partner with the alcohol industry, in collaboration with SABMiller in 2012. At that time the Fund was exposed to serious criticism⁸. The argument made at the time, that it was naïve of the Global Fund to exclude partnerships with the arms and tobacco industries while failing to understand the conflict between alcohol industry and public health and sustainable development goals, is still valid today.

All these concerns are exacerbated by the documentation of Heineken's conduct in Africa. In the book "Heineken in Africa. A Multinational Unleashed" Olivier van Beemen writes:

"Heineken claims to have a positive impact on economic development and employment in Africa. After investigation though, these claims turn out to be unfounded or even false. On balance, Heineken's presence has hardly benefited Africa at all, and may in fact have been harmful."

Respectful request for reconsideration

We are deeply concerned about this partnership and its implications for global health. We therefore respectfully request that you end the partnership with Heineken and that you take our concerns into consideration when conducting due diligence exploring future partnerships.

We welcome dialogue with you and remain at your disposal for further discussions.

Yours sincerely,



Kristina Sperkova
International President,
IOGT International,



Sally Casswell
Chair,
Global Alcohol Policy Alliance



Katie Dain
CEO,
NCD Alliance

New York, Auckland, London, February 1, 2018

⁷ Bakke, Ø and Endal D. (2010), Alcohol policies out of context: Drinks industry supplanting government role in alcohol policies in sub-Saharan Africa *Addiction*, 105, 22-28, 2010

⁸ Matzopoulos et.al. (2012), Global Fund collusion with liquor giant is a clear conflict of interest, in *Bulletin of the World Health Organ* 2012 ;90:67-69 . doi:10.2471/BLT.11.091413 ,

**Letter of concern to the Global Fund regarding partnership with Heineken
Appendix**

For media contacts:

IOGT International

Maik Dünnbier
Director of Strategy and
Advocacy
maik.duennbier@iogt.org
www.iogt.org

**Global Alcohol Policy
Alliance**

Sally Casswell
Chair
s.casswell@massey.ac.nz
www.globalgapa.org

NCD Alliance

Lucy Westerman
Communications & Policy
Officer
lwesterman@ncdalliance.org
www.NCDAlliance.org

Note to editor:

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The Book "Heineken in Africa. A Multinational Unleashed" is a critical case study about the business practices of the Dutch brewer in Africa. The revelations in the book have led to parliamentary questions being asked in both the Dutch national assembly and the European Parliament,

Endorsed by (at 1 February 2018):

Alcohol and Drug Information Center (ADIC), Sri Lanka
Center for Youth Education (CEM), Bosnia and Herzegovina
European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare)
FORUT, Norway
Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), Australia
West African Alcohol Policy Alliance
East African Alcohol Policy Alliance
Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance
IOGT-NTO movement, Sweden
Healthy Caribbean Coalition
Vital Strategies

