



Joint WMA and GAPA statement on the draft action plan (2022-2030) to effectively implement the Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol as a public health priority

COMMENTS TO THE MEMBER STATES TO THE 75TH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

The World Medical Association (WMA) and the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA), representing physicians and public health actors worldwide, consider that alcohol consumption constitutes a major trigger for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), communicable diseases, violence, and injuries and note with great concerns the uneven and limited progress made to reverse the current trend since 2010. Contrary to industry claims, research has shown that there is no safe level of alcohol consumption¹ and there is no safe level of alcohol consumption for the heart.²

We actively supported the adoption of WHO Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol in 2010, marking a turning point with the achievement of a global coordinated approach to address the alcohol burden. Likewise, we welcome the WHO commitment to boost the dynamic by developing an action plan (2022-2030) to effectively implement the Global strategy on alcohol. The draft Alcohol action plan to be considered for adoption by the World Health Assembly (WHA75) 22-28 May 2022 is a compromise document to which we contributed actively. In view of the coming discussions, we recommend incorporating the following key issues:

1. **Regular reporting to the WHA:** *Member States should request to WHO to report to the World Health Assembly biennially to ensure accountability and an opportunity to discuss alcohol, as is the case with the tobacco status report.*
2. **Strengthening support for Member States to prevent interference in policy making by the alcohol industry:** *It is our opinion that economic operators have no place in each action point of the action plan. We call instead for WHO to develop specific guidance to Member States on how to protect alcohol policy development, implementation, and evaluation from alcohol industry interference, given the industry's deliberate efforts to water down the Action Plan³.*
3. **Protecting recommendations for the Best Buy alcohol policies and the WHO SAFER measures:** *We recommend a more ambitious action plan including the most cost-effective regulatory and fiscal measures to reduce harmful alcohol consumption. We further call for health impact assessments of trade agreements, as a key necessity to protect, promote and prioritize public health over commercial interests.*

¹ GBD 2016 Alcohol Collaborators. (2018). Alcohol use and burden for 195 countries and territories, 1990–2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016. *Lancet* 392:1015-1035. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31310-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31310-2).

² World Heart Federation. (2022). The impact of alcohol consumption on cardiovascular health: Myths and measures. <https://world-heart-federation.org/wp-content/uploads/WHF-Policy-Brief-Alcohol.pdf>

³ Dwyer R, Room R, O'Brien P, Cook M, Gleeson D. (2022). Alcohol industry submissions to the WHO 2020 Consultation on the development of an Alcohol Action Plan: A content and thematic

4. **Reinstating the target of a 20% reduction in alcohol per capita consumption (APC) by 2030:**
We strongly support returning to the target of a 20% reduction in APC.
5. **Recognizing health professionals as partners in combatting the harmful use of alcohol:** *We recommend that the key role played by health professionals in education, advocacy and research be more adequately reflected in the plan.*
6. We stand by our call for an **international legally binding instrument for alcohol.**

Given its bundling into the NCD suite of documents, **we would however support the adoption of the compromise text in its current version.**

The [Global Alcohol Policy Alliance](#) (GAPA) is a network of non-governmental organisations and people working in public health promoting science-based policies independent of commercial interests to reduce alcohol-related harm worldwide.

The [World Medical Association](#) (WMA) is the global federation of Medical Associations representing the millions of physicians worldwide with a long-standing commitment towards the reduction of the harmful impact of alcohol on health and society.