

Oslo, 27 April 2021

Anil Soni  
CEO WHO foundation  
Geneva  
Switzerland

### **Alcohol in WHO Foundation Gift Acceptance Policy**

Dear Mr Soni,

The World Health Organization (WHO) has a crucial role to play in improving public health globally across a wide range of challenges. In this regard it is commendable that the WHO Foundation is set up as a grant-making foundation to support WHO's mission. The global health challenges are both very acute, as illustrated by the present COVID-19 pandemic, and longer lasting, as has been the case for the surge in Non-Communicable Diseases.

The Global Alcohol Policy Alliance is a network of non-governmental organisations and people working in public health who advocate for effective alcohol policies, free from commercial interests. Over the last 20 years we have followed the WHO's work on reducing harm from alcohol and related work on mental health, NCDs, HIV/AIDS, road traffic accidents and others. We noted with appreciation early on that the WHO Foundation's Gift Acceptance Policy included alcohol in the 'Red flag' category. Considering the disease burden related to alcohol we found this red flag for alcohol very appropriate. Now we see that a new Gift Acceptance Policy – "shared for SRF purposes" – has been published on your website. In it, however, alcohol has been moved to the orange category.

Alcohol industry has an obligation to maximize profit and history has thought us that they will not be supportive of effective public health measures. On the contrary the alcohol industry's persistent role in opposing evidence-based alcohol policy regulations, as exemplified in their submission to the recent consultation for the WHO alcohol action Plan development, and their constant pressure to change the SDG indicator for the alcohol related health target (3.5). Providing grants to the WHO Foundation would however give them a chance to reap the benefit you outline for the foundation's partners:

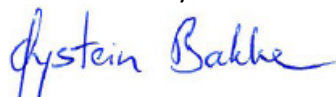
*"Align your brand with global health, enhance employee engagement and achieve your CSR, corporate engagement and purpose-related goals."*

It is the role of the public health community, including the WHO Foundation, to set regulations that do not facilitate the undermining of public health efforts by an industry or other vested interests.

With this in mind we wanted to reach out to you to inquire:

- What is the background for this change?
- Does the WHO Foundation expect to receive any grants from the alcohol industry?
- Is the change for alcohol from red to orange category rectifiable, i.e., what is the process to re-include alcohol in the red flag category?
- When is the next Board meeting which will consider the policy?

Yours Sincerely



Øystein Bakke  
Secretary, GAPA