

**IOGT International Official Statement to  
2017 ECOSOC High-Level Segment**

**20.07.17**

*2017 Theme:*

*Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges*

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Dear Excellences, distinguished delegates,

I'm thankful for the opportunity to address you today.

IOGT International is the premier global network for community action and policy solutions to prevent and reduce harm caused by alcohol and other drugs. We are 143 member organizations in 58 countries.

This year's theme of "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world" is the daily motto for the work of IOGT members. In our work, we can clearly see that children and youth, women and people with mental health problems are extremely vulnerable to the vicious cycle of discrimination, deprivation and poverty – often fueled by alcohol and other drugs.

Leaving no one behind is our common obligation. But looking at the SDGs through the eyes of the most marginalized, we clearly see massive obstacles for achieving our shared goals.

The failure to protect Women's Human Rights, promote gender equality and foster women's and girl's empowerment is the greatest obstacle to achieving the SDGs.

The lack of measures to promote the wellbeing of our children and youth is undermining the sustainability of our societies. Investment in prevention and health promotion works and is economically smart.

It is possible to eradicate poverty and achieve prosperity for all – but only if we put front and center the realities and rights of the people who currently are being left behind. We need to succeed in harnessing their solutions, to succeed with the 2030 Agenda.

For example, women and girls, and children and youth are at disproportionate risk to suffer from alcohol harm. Just two figures illustrate this fact:

- Women in rural Rwanda and other deprived regions rank alcohol as the number one risk factor for gender-based violence.
- And: Globally, alcohol is the leading risk factor for death and disability among people aged 15 to 49 years. This is the age range in which people are at their most productive economically.

The evidence is clear: Alcohol harm is an obstacle to sustainable development. It adversely impacts 13 out of 17 SDGs.

We are encouraged by your reiteration of the need to strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, emphasized in the newly adopted Ministerial Declaration.

In this spirit, I call on you today to take bold steps to use evidence-based and cost-effective alcohol policy tools for achieving the SDGs.

Alcohol taxation, for instance, is a win-win measure to promote development and improve domestic resource mobilization. Curbing the unethical practices of the alcohol industry is of utmost importance for achieving our shared goals.

We know the evidence. We have the policy tools. Now we need political will to take action for a better world for all.

I wish us good luck in our common endeavor and I thank you for your attention.