

## **IOGT International Statement**

**WHO Forum on Alcohol, Drugs and Addictive Behaviors**

**26.06.17**

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**Dear Chairman, distinguished delegates, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,**

It is an honor and privilege to address you today.

On behalf of our members – 143 civil society organizations from 57 countries – please allow me to highlight three crucial aspects of a comprehensive response to the harm caused by alcohol, other drugs and addictive behaviors:

### **The first aspect is prevention.**

Prevention strategies based on independent scientific evidence, using high-impact policy measures and working with families, schools, and communities can ensure that people can lead healthy, sustainable lives. For every dollar spent on prevention, at least ten can be saved in future health, social and economic costs.

### **The second aspect is environment.**

For people to be able to make sustainable lifestyle choices and lead healthy lives, the environments they live and work in do matter greatly. That is why population-based measures, like the three alcohol policy best buys, are essential tools.

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**The third aspect is the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.**

For example, harmful use of alcohol is a major obstacle to sustainable development, adversely impacting all three dimensions of development: the social, environmental and economic dimension. We heard that about 2 billion people are using alcohol, but many more are affected by alcohol-related harm in families, workplaces, communities and economies.

Alcohol-related harm is not a fringe issue. Therefore our collective response to alcohol and other drugs will matter greatly for the success or failure in achieving the SDGs.

In this collective effort, we do have a powerful opponent: the alcohol industry, like the tobacco industry, obstructs evidence-based public policy making and spreads uncertainty about scientific evidence concerning alcohol-related harm and population-based alcohol policy measures; therefore it will be crucial going forward to safeguard WHO and governments from undue influence.

A meeting like this shows, what our members experience around the world: There's wide interest in tackling harmful substances. And there is a big need for more technical assistance from WHO to decision-makers in governments and parliaments, for example concerning alcohol taxation in particular and alcohol policy development in general.

In this spirit we are hopeful that this forum will generate much needed momentum, political will and urgency. What we discuss here matters and what we do afterwards has the potential to improve people's health, save lives and foster sustainable development.

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