

# GLOBAL ALCOHOL POLICY CONFERENCE OCTOBER

*The Global Alcohol Policy Conference (GAPC2023), "Investing in People before Profits: Building Momentum towards the Framework Convention on Alcohol Control," will be held from 24 - 26 October 2023 in Cape Town, South Africa.*

## Media Release

### COLLECTIVE ACTION NEEDED TO REDUCE ALCOHOL HARM IN SOUTH AFRICA

24 October 2023

**Cape Town:** The first Global Alcohol Policy Conference on African soil got off to a good start as Minister of Social Development Lindiwe Zulu reaffirmed government's commitment to work towards reducing alcohol harm alongside academics, policy specialists and civil society.

Minister Zulu said: "For us as the host country, this conference could not have come at a more opportune time. A month ago, we tabled the Draft Policy on the Prevention and Treatment for Substance Use Disorders to the Social Protection, Community and Human Development (SPCHD) Cabinet Committee for public consultation.

The policy provides a framework for decision-making within the whole sector about where the greatest drug-related harms are occurring, and identifying the best strategies to address those harms."

The Cabinet Committee approved the Policy for public consultation and recommended the resuscitation of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for alcohol and substance abuse to ensure coordination, strategic alignment and decision making in harm prevention and reduction strategies across government.

Minister Zulu expressed that she was confident that this policy conference under the theme: "Investing in People Before Profits: Building momentum towards the Framework Convention on Alcohol Control" will provide the necessary political impetus and generate new research and evidence-based ideas in drug and alcohol policy."

Bongiwe Ndondo, the Chairperson of the Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance in South Africa, called on government to truly prioritise people.

"I wish to remind us that our lawmakers are us, and we are our law makers. The people we send to be legislators are who our advocacy efforts need to target the most. Perhaps even more than government, who should be enforcing what society has agreed," Ndondo said.

She added that the role of regulators needed to be strengthened. One must underscore the role of government as a referee in protecting citizens' interests and in particular those most impacted and with the least power.

Ndondo reminded conference delegates of the need to be aggressive against the alcohol industry as their interest is never on the side of the people.

"I want to remind us that we have been here before. We cannot forget the gains made in the fight against smoking, a dark period in our history when the power and influence of the tobacco industry seemed unsurmountable; when the industry employed aggressive tactics to thwart and derail legislative changes intended to safeguard the interests of public health," she said.

She urged South Africans to see the battle for the regulation of alcohol use in the same light as tobacco regulation.

"We are faced, collectively, with the responsibility to centre humanity in the face of narrow commercial interests of a powerful minority.

We know that corporates left to their own, will maximise profits at the expense of all and sundry," Ndondo said.

Chairperson of the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA), Professor Sally Casswell in her opening remarks said she we need to work towards the reduction of alcohol harm and the reduction of inequities in relation to alcohol harm.

"The industries are in fact targeting the consumers, new consumers in middle-income-countries in order to increase their growth and their profits," said Casswell.

The conference continues tomorrow and will discuss:

- Regulating digital marketing of alcohol (8:45 - 10:30)
- Disrupting the impacts of conflicts of interest: Government and Inter-governmental responsibility and accountability in relation to conflict of interest. (14:00 - 15:30)

The two sessions will be live on [www.dsdtv.org.za](http://www.dsdtv.org.za)

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Issued by the conference partners