

7TH GLOBAL ALCOHOL POLICY CONFERENCE

24 - 26 OCTOBER 2023

INVESTING IN PEOPLE
BEFORE PROFITS

BUILDING MOMENTUM TOWARDS THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON ALCOHOL CONTROL

More global action and awareness are needed to turn the tide on 'World No Alcohol Day'

Media Release

Cape Town, Sunday, 2 October 2022: Today is 'World No Alcohol Day' which is commemorated to encourage the general public to say no to alcohol and to highlight the negative impact of harmful drinking. Just over 30% of adult South Africans drink, but a large percentage of those who do, binge drink.

South Africa has been labelled as one of the countries heavily affected by the increasing burden of harmful alcohol use. With a high incidence of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) driven by alcohol.

"As Covid19 so clearly brought to our attention, South Africa stands out among countries in terms of the heavy burden experienced from the harmful use of alcohol and, like so many other countries, it needs to implement evidence-based interventions to turn the tide, supported by local and global action to limit the push back from powerful commercial interests," said Professor Charles Parry, the Director: Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Research Unit, at the South African Medical Research Council and chair of the local organising committee for the upcoming Global Alcohol Policy Conference (GAPC2023).

He further stated that: "GAPC2023, with its theme of "Investing in people before profits: Building momentum towards a framework convention on alcohol controls", aims to bring researchers, policymakers and others together to shift the pendulum towards a healthier society, less burdened by harmful drinking practices." The policy conference will be held in Cape Town, on 24 - 26 October 2023.

Aadielah Maker Diedricks the Regional Coordinator for the Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance (SAAPA) said a whole of government approach was needed to address alcohol harm. "Government and officials need to show the political will to address alcohol harm. The disproportionately high numbers of alcohol outlets and trading hours outside the national norms and standards of 2016 are central to the widespread alcohol availability in most communities, making it easy to access and abuse alcohol. The government urgently needs to engage in a process to harmonise legislation at the local, provincial and national levels and ensure that all communities enjoy the same rights to safety," Maker Diedricks added.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), alcohol as an intoxicant affects many structures and processes in the central nervous system. It increases the risk for intentional and unintentional injuries and adverse social consequences. Alcohol has considerable toxic effects on the digestive-and-cardiovascular systems. Alcoholic beverages are classified as carcinogenic by the International Agency for Research on Cancer and increase the risk of several cancer types. Furthermore, alcohol as an immunosuppressant increases the risk of communicable diseases, including tuberculosis and HIV.

Harmful use of alcohol is accountable for 7.1% and 2.2% of the global burden of disease for males and females respectively. Alcohol is the leading risk factor for premature mortality and disability among those aged 15 to 49 years, accounting for 10 per cent of all deaths in this age group. Disadvantaged and especially vulnerable populations have higher rates of alcohol-related death and hospitalization. Alcohol consumption contributes to 3 million deaths each year globally and to millions of people's disabilities and poor health. Overall, the harmful use of alcohol is responsible for 5.1% of the global burden of disease.

END

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More about the Global Alcohol Policy Conference in 2023:

GAPC is the leading forum for the world's alcohol policy makers, advocates, researchers, civil society activists and practitioners. With its high level of heavy episodic drinking and related harms, and its long history of challenges in getting policy shifts in areas such as controls on alcohol marketing and retail sales of alcohol, South Africa will be an ideal venue in which to discuss alcohol policy and in which to host GAPC2023. - <https://gapc2023.samrc.ac.za/>

The conference is hosted by the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance and in collaboration with the South African Medical Research Council, SAAPA, the Department of Health, the Department of Social Development, the National Research Foundation, and several NGOs.

Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA):

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 - <https://globalgapa.org/>

South African Alcohol Policy Alliance (SAAPA):

A collaboration of civil society organisations across Southern African countries, SAAPA, is a network which aims to promote the harmonisation and acceleration of evidence-based alcohol policy development and implementation in the region - <https://saapa.africa/>