

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

77 days left before the start of the 7th Global Alcohol Policy Conference in Cape Town, South Africa, 2023

Tuesday, 8 August 2023

Cape Town: The 7th annual conference of the Global Alcohol Alliance (GAPC2023) is scheduled to take place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre 2 from October 24th to 26th. Distinguished figures from the realms of research, science, activism, and policymaking will convene to give inputs that have the potential to fortify the implementation of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Global Alcohol Action Plan.

In recent times, the alcohol industry's involvement in shaping alcohol-related policies worldwide has intensified, prompting the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA) to call for a collective discussion on thwarting this trend. The conference aligns with WHO's endeavours and seeks to champion the establishment of a more binding international framework for alcohol regulation, akin to the tobacco industry's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Under the thematic banner of *"Investing in People before Profits: Building Momentum towards the Framework Convention on Alcohol Control,"* this biennial gathering aims to emphasise the need for proactive steps at both national and especially global levels.

The Irish government's recent adoption of Section 12 of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018, which mandates comprehensive health information labels on alcohol products as well as their adoption of minimum unit pricing on alcohol products, reflects a growing movement towards implementing tougher alcohol control measures in several countries. The labels specifically mandate warnings about alcohol's connection to liver disease, health risks during pregnancy, and the link between alcohol and fatal cancers.

Co-hosted by the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA), the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), the Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance (SAAPA), and the Department of Social Development (DSD), the conference enjoys the support of co-sponsors including the WHO, DG Murray Trust, the National Department of Health, and SA Tourism. Other funders include the National Research Foundation, the Western Cape Provincial Government and Open Philanthropies.

Professor Charles Parry, chair of the local conference organising committee, emphasised the lack of progress at both a local and a global level in addressing alcohol-related harms since WHO's global alcohol strategy's inception 13 years ago. The conference assumes importance against the backdrop of South Africa grappling with a significant burden of alcohol-related issues, spanning infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, mental health challenges, violence, and gender-based injuries.

Professor Parry highlighted several potentially beneficial legislative efforts addressing alcohol marketing, drink driving, access to alcohol, and underage drinking in South Africa have faltered, often due to the alcohol industry's influential lobbying. This impasse has hindered substantial advancements in addressing alcohol-related problems. He further noted that South Africa's high levels of alcohol consumption and associated harm manifest in alcohol-fuelled violence, infections, and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Syndrome (FASD).

The recent implementation of the Liquor Act's trading hour regulations in Limpopo Province, including a midnight curfew for serving alcoholic beverages, signifies a favourable development. Professor Parry noted that recent scientific findings from a modelling study conducted by UCT in the Western Cape demonstrate that implementing a midnight closing time for alcohol sales could yield significant benefits. "This change has the potential to notably decrease fatalities, mitigate non-fatal injuries, and consequently lead to diminished expenditures within the police and healthcare sectors," he said.

One focal point of the conference is the examination of structural interventions to mitigate alcohol-related harm, with special emphasis on alcohol taxation and marketing. Addressing the conflict of interest posed by the alcohol industry on policy development also figures prominently on the conference agenda.

Professor Sally Casswell, chairperson of GAPAPA, highlighted the conference's dual purpose: facilitating information exchange for informed public policy responses and creating a platform to bolster alcohol-related research, particularly intervention research. The conference's African location is timely, as it draws attention to the alcohol beverage industry's expanding interest in the continent. Many African nations lack robust alcohol policies, and even those with comprehensive policies struggle with effective implementation.

Aadielah Maker Diedericks, the regional coordinator of SAAPA, underscored the conference's potential to strengthen alcohol policy networks, supporting regional governments in devising effective policies that have proven efficacy in reducing alcohol-related harm. The conference seeks to amplify the voices of indigenous and marginalised groups, offering them a platform often inaccessible to policymakers. Additionally, it aspires to drive policy reforms in South Africa that have languished since 2010.

The conference will have several plenaries which focus on Gender-Based Violence and Alcohol; Alcohol Pricing Policies; Regulating digital marketing of alcohol; Disrupting the

Impacts of Conflict of Interest; and New initiatives in promoting impactful policies and reducing industry influence. These plenaries will be led by some of the world's leading researchers, activists and scientists (<https://gapc2023.samrc.ac.za/speakers.html>).

The conference will also have several side events and workshops where civil society organisations and researchers will interact in pushing for greater policy intervention from governments around the world.

End

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* **Conference website:** <https://gapc2023.samrc.ac.za/index.html>

* **Conference Program:** <https://gapc2023.samrc.ac.za/programme.html>

* **Keynote Speakers:** <https://gapc2023.samrc.ac.za/speakers.html>

To register as a member of the media contact Mr Julian A Jacobs at 061 917 9661 or julianjacobsjj@icloud.com

Note to News desks:

GAPC Co-hosts

1. Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA) [Co-Host]

It is a network of non-governmental organisations and people working in public health agencies and researchers in academic and other institutions who share information on alcohol issues and advocate evidence-based alcohol policies, free from commercial interests. Regional and national alliances affiliated with GAPA operate in Africa (Southern Africa, East Africa, and West Africa), the European Union, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, the USA, and Western Pacific regions. The bi-annual GAPA conference is the leading forum for the world's alcohol policy makers, advocates, researchers, civil society activists and practitioners. - <https://globalgapa.org/>

2. SA Medical Research Council (SAMRC) [Co-Host]

The SAMRC was established in 1969 with a mandate to improve the health of the country's population, through research, development, and technology transfer, so that people can enjoy a better quality of life. The scope of the organisation's research projects includes tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, cardiovascular and non-communicable diseases, gender and health, and alcohol and other drug abuse. <https://www.samrc.ac.za/>

3. Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance (SAAPA) [Co-Host]

SAAPA was established in 2012 as a platform for civil society organisations in the Southern African region to share resources and experiences in the lobby for evidence-based alcohol policy that promotes the well-being of citizens. <https://saapa.africa/>

4. Department of Social Development [Co-Host]

Management and oversight over social security, encompassing social assistance and social insurance policies that aim to prevent and alleviate poverty in the event of life cycle risks such as loss of income due to unemployment, disability, old age, or death occurring. Developmental social welfare services that provide support to reduce poverty, vulnerability, and the impact of HIV and AIDS through sustainable development programmes in partnership with implementing agents such as State-funded institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs). - <https://www.dsd.gov.za/index.php>

GAPC Sponsors:

1. The World Health Organisations (WHO) [Co-Sponsor]

The World Health Organization leads and champions global efforts to achieve better health for all. By connecting countries, people and partners, we strive to give everyone, everywhere an equal chance at a safe and healthy life. - <https://www.who.int/>

2. National Research Foundation [Co-Sponsor]

The NRF is an independent statutory body established through the National Research Foundation Act (Act No 23 of 1998), following a system-wide review conducted for the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST). The NRF promotes South African research and innovation interests across the country and internationally, and together with research institutions, businesses, industry, and international partners, we build bridges between research communities for mutual benefit that contributes to National Development. - <https://www.nrf.ac.za/about-us/>

3. SA National Convention Bureau (SANCB) [Co-Sponsor]

The SANCB is a ‘one-stop solution’ for independent information and assistance, giving neutral advice on all aspects of hosting and organising any business event in South Africa. - <https://www.southafrica.net/za/en/>

4. DG Murray Trust [Co-Sponsor]

The DG Murray Trust (DGMT) is a public innovator that aims to develop South Africa’s potential through strategic investment. Together with other funders, NGOs, and government, DGMT studies and supports work being done in the critical areas of early childhood development (ECD), youth unemployment, school dropout and education quality, as well as innovation in the civil sector. As such, our team is well-placed to share critical insights or provide comments on a range of issues in these areas – or if we are unable to, connect the press to people in our network who can. - <https://dgmt.co.za/>

5. The Department of Health (DOH) [Co-Sponsor]

The Department of Health’s vision is for all South Africans to have a long and healthy life. Its mission relates to improving citizens’ health status through the prevention of illnesses and the promotion of healthy lifestyles and to consistently improving the healthcare delivery system by focusing on access, equity, efficiency, quality, and sustainability. - <https://www.health.gov.za/>

6. Open Philanthropy — Conference Travel Support [Co-sponsor]

Open Philanthropy identifies outstanding giving opportunities, makes grants, follows the results, and publishes its findings. Its mission is to give as effectively as it can. This falls within our work on [global health and well-being](#).