

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

7th Global Alcohol Policy Conference coming to South Africa 2023

17 March 2023

Cape Town: The Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA), the SA Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and the Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance (SAAPA) are pleased to announce the hosting of its 7th global alcohol policy bi-annual conference which will take place in Cape Town, South Africa from 24 – 26 October 2023. The support from the South African government and its entities and partners is highly valued.

GAPA chairperson, Professor Sally Casswell says it is fitting for GAPA to come to Africa, a region which has a vibrant network of associations that are members of GAPA, researchers, policymakers, and activists in alcohol policy development.

“Industry interference in alcohol policy development in Africa has been well-documented and is increasing, and it is time that the Global Alcohol Policy Conference be held in Africa. There is now more than ever a need to bring together colleagues from around the world to discuss how to support efforts of WHO to strengthen the implementation of the WHO Global Action Plan [on alcohol] and also to engage on how best to advocate for a more legally binding global instrument to address alcohol, such as a Framework Convention on Alcohol Control, similar to what is in place for tobacco,” Professor Casswell said.

Local conference organising committee chairperson, Prof Charles Parry, director of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC)’s Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drug Research Unit, says that the conference comes at the time when South Africa faces a heavy burden in terms of alcohol-related harms such as infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, mental health problems, and violence and injury (especially related to gender-based violence).

“There has been a lack of progress in terms of addressing harmful use of alcohol over the past 12 years since the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) global alcohol strategy was launched,” said Prof Parry.

The 7th bi-annual conference is co-hosted by GAPA, the SAMRC, and the Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance (SAAPA). It is co-sponsored by the Department of Social

Development, the National Research Foundation (NRF), the SA National Convention Bureau (SA Tourism), and the DG Murray Trust. The bi-annual conference theme is ***“Investing in People before Profits: building momentum towards the Framework Convention on Alcohol Control”***.

A component of the meeting will focus on the efficacy of structural-level interventions to reduce harm from alcohol use with a particular emphasis on the taxation and marketing of alcohol. How to disrupt the negative impacts on policy development due to the conflict of interest of the alcohol industry will also be a key topic at the conference.

Professor Parry indicated that in South Africa a few potentially useful pieces of legislation in the areas of addressing alcohol marketing, drunk driving, uncontrolled availability of alcohol and underage drinking appear to have gone nowhere – sometimes because of intense lobbying from the alcohol industry and its allies and as a result, we have not progressed much in terms of tackling alcohol problems.

“South Africa has among the highest levels of alcohol use and harm globally with the latter reflected in alcohol-fuelled violence, alcohol related infectious diseases, and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Syndrome (FASD),” he said.

He further added that he hopes that this conference would serve as a forum for showcasing what we are doing to address problems associated with alcohol use and as a catalyst for generating ideas about how to move forward using evidence-based strategies used in other countries.

Professor Casswell noted that besides information sharing to facilitate a better public policy response, the conference is being hosted to create a platform to strengthen research on alcohol issues and especially on intervention research in this area in South Africa, in the continent of Africa, and beyond.

“Previous conferences have been held in the Americas (USA), Europe (Scotland and Ireland), in Asia (Thailand and South Korea) and in Australia. It is now a good time to host this conference in Africa which is one of the geographic areas which the alcohol beverage industry has turned to in its thirst for new markets. Many countries in Africa have weak or non-existent alcohol policies and even countries which have good policies have problems with their implementation,” said Professor Casswell.

Ms Aadielah Maker Diedericks, regional coordinator of SAAPA remarked that the conference also has the potential to strengthen alcohol policy networks to support government actions in the region to address the harm from alcohol use through ensuring that policies are pursued that have some proven efficacy and thus have a stronger likelihood of impacting positively on reducing harm from the use of alcohol. It is expected through GAPC-2023 to strengthen advocacy for effective policies and give a voice to indigenous and other

groups whose voices are not often heard by policy makers and through advocacy to support alcohol policy reforms in South Africa that for various reasons have been stalled since 2010.

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

Note to News desks: Additional Information

GAPC hosts:

1. Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA)

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 to 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)

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. With a strategic objective to help strengthen the health systems of the country – in line with that of the Department of Health, the SAMRC constantly identifies the main causes of death in South Africa. - <https://www.samrc.ac.za/>

3. Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance (SAAPA)

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/>

GAPC Sponsors:

1. Department of Social Development

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>

2. National Research Foundation (NRF)

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). As a government mandated research and science development agency the NRF funds research, the development of high-end Human Capacity and critical research infrastructure to promote knowledge production across all disciplinary fields. The NRF promotes South African research and innovation interests across the country and internationally, and together with research institutions, business, 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)

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 [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 comment 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/>



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