

# **"This supposed conflict of interest":**

Reflections on alcohol industry framing in recent WHO consultations

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# CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

- I work at Cochrane, the international network which produces Cochrane systematic reviews, leading their advocacy function.
- This research does not represent the views of Cochrane.

# OVERVIEW

## ➤ **SETTING THE SCENE**

Context + methods

## ➤ **KEY FINDINGS**

Overview of the two main frames

## ➤ **IMPLICATIONS FOR AN FCAC**

What does this mean in terms of a binding global instrument for alcohol?





This is what  
*change*  
looks like.

DIAGEO Together with WaterAid care WATER RESILIENCE COALITION





# METHODS

- ① **Frame analysis of alcohol industry responses to WHO consultations**
  - Implementation of the Global Strategy, Oct-Nov 2019 (38 responses)
  - Development of an Action Plan, Nov-Dec 2020 (72 responses)
- ② **Interested in alcohol industry framing of its role in global health governance**
- ③ **Range of industry actors**
  - Trade associations
  - Companies
  - Social aspects / public relations organisations (SAPROs)
  - Think tanks



# KEY FINDINGS

# TWO FRAMES



## Collaborative

- Alignment between industry and public health
- Mainstreaming of whole-of-society approaches
- Advocacy for self-regulation



## Adversarial

- Conflict of interest
- Dissatisfaction with perceived industry exclusion
- Dismissal of an FCAC



# COLLABORATIVE

- ① **Alignment between industry and public health**
- ② Mainstreaming of whole-of-society approaches
- ③ Advocacy for self-regulation





“IARD and its member companies stand ready to play our part and contribute towards strengthening the achievement of our **shared public health objectives** in reducing the harmful use of alcohol.”



“A recovery from the pandemic... **should incorporate policies that nudge consumers toward beer and other low alcohol concentration beverages** by design... such policies are good for recovering economies and **aligned with national and global public health objectives.**”

# COLLABORATIVE

- ① Alignment between industry and public health
- ② **Mainstreaming of whole-of-society approaches**
  - Phrase 'whole of society' appeared 122 times across 41 submissions
  - References to Global Strategy, SDGs, UN Political Declaration on NCDs (2018)
- ③ Advocacy for self-regulation



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# ADVERSARIAL

- ① **Conflict of interest**
- ② Dissatisfaction with perceived industry exclusion
- ③ Dismissal of an FCAC





“Belgian Brewers **does not believe there is an inherent conflict of interest** between the brewers’ interests and those of public health.”



“There is **no inherent conflict** and we seek to intensify the partnership that we have with government, NGO’s and other members of the Dutch National Prevention Agreement initiative.”



“One of the major setbacks for achieving this ‘all of society approach’ is the assumption that all collaboration with the private sector has a **deep-set and unsurmountable conflict of interest... this doesn’t have to be so.**”



“We are unaware as to the meaning of the phrase ‘commercial determinants of health’ and what it means in the context of GAS.”





“With a group of academics committed to serving public health goals acting as a firewall between industry funding and scientific research, **industry funds could be used to respond to both its own interests and the public good.**”



“Economic operators welcome dialogue with WHO and academic institutions to explore mechanisms to **enable credible private sector support** for alcohol health and policy-related research, which **addresses perceived conflicts of interest.**”

# ADVERSARIAL

- ① Conflict of interest
- ② **Dissatisfaction with perceived industry exclusion**
- ③ Dismissal of an FCAC



# ADVERSARIAL

- ① Conflict of interest
- ① Dissatisfaction with perceived industry exclusion
- ① **Dismissal of an FCAC**  
“seek international solutions within the WHO’s mandate if appropriate actions to protect the health of populations cannot be implemented.”

“A framework convention has already been considered and **rejected by the Executive Board**, and that **member states** have made clear they **do not support this initiative.**”



“It is **particularly troubling** that the WHO Secretariat continues to suggest potential need for a “global normative law on alcohol at the intergovernmental level” without clearly stating that such a model was **explicitly not supported by Member States during the 2020 World Health Assembly.**”



“The introduction of this as a matter for consideration is **both unhelpful and unsupported** by previous decisions of the World Health Assembly which agreed the roadmap for the Global Alcohol strategy. **We ask that references to a framework convention for alcohol be removed.**”





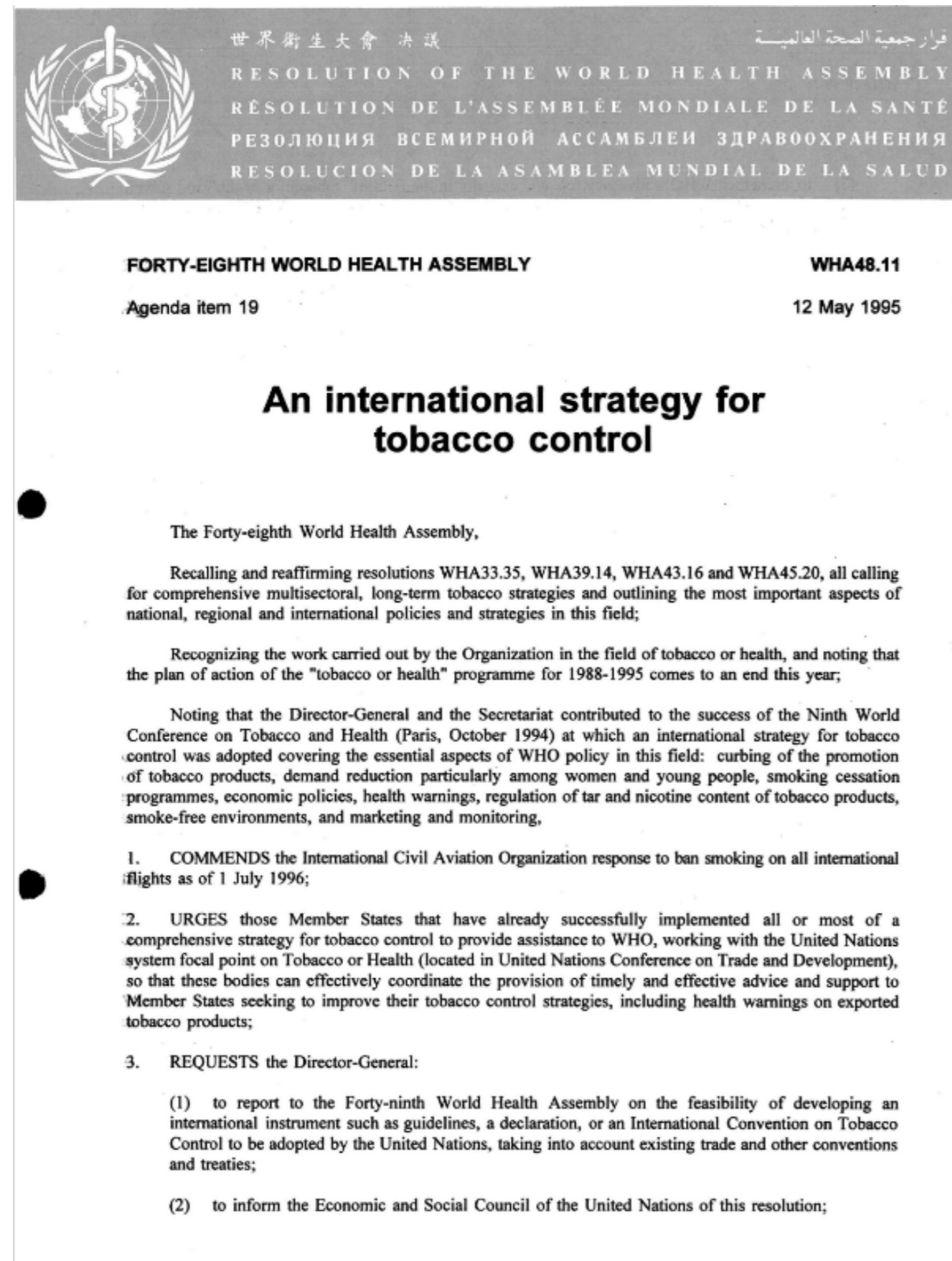
**IMPLICATIONS  
FOR AN FCAC**

# IMPLICATIONS

- ① FCAC presented as definitively rejected proposal and as inconsistent with SDGs
- ① Alcohol industry ignores the Member States who have shown interest in an FCAC
- ① Text to “seek international solutions within the WHO’s mandate” remained in final Action Plan



# WHA 48.11 An international strategy for tobacco control



REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to report to the Forty-ninth World Health Assembly on the feasibility of developing an international instrument such as guidelines, a declaration, or an International Convention on Tobacco Control to be adopted by the United Nations, taking into account existing trade and other conventions and treaties;

# IMPLICATIONS

- ① Action on conflict of interest as a way forward
  - FCAC as a solution for conflict of interest
  - ...or conflict of interest to support an FCAC?
  
- ② Clarity on engagement with the alcohol industry and industry's role

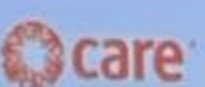




This is what  
*change*  
looks like.

DIAGEO

Together with





Thank you

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