

UGANDA ALCOHOL POLICY CONFERENCE, 2018.

*Open Letter to His Excellency General Yoweri Kaguta Museveni,
President of the Republic of Uganda.*

“Unite against alcohol harm: a call to action”

We, the 198 participants of the first ever Uganda Alcohol Policy Conference, respectfully and humbly address you today. We are representatives of communities, civil society and academia of various backgrounds from different parts of Uganda, the East African community and the wider Sub-Saharan region. We have come together at Hotel Africana in Kampala Uganda from the 28th to 29th of November 2018 to discuss the extent of the alcohol burden on our society and to strategise about innovative approaches to prevent and reduce alcohol related harm and to promote health and development for all.

We have heeded to your words, “Uganda needs fewer bars and less drinking”. We thank you for this clear and unmistakable analysis and it is exactly with this urgency and conviction that we’ve gathered. For too long, pervasive alcohol harm has been ignored as a massive obstacle to achieving health and development for all. Uganda’s per capita alcohol consumption for people older than 15 years is 9.6 litres which is way above the continent’s average (6.3 litres). Having in mind that Uganda has the second youngest population, it is alarming that 60% of our youth are initiated in alcohol use before 18 years of age (Uganda Alcohol Status Report 2018). Consequently, Uganda is documented to suffer some of the worst alcohol related consequences globally. Alcohol is responsible for poverty, numerous cases of gender-based violence, 200 disease

conditions such as HIV/AIDS and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD's) and contributed to 6.5% of the total deaths in Uganda.

We've come together to unite against alcohol harm that is destroying our families and communities, that is ruining our workplaces, that is reducing our productivity and socio-economic development, that is keeping our children and young people from living up to their fullest potential. We are alarmed by the current aggressive and indiscriminate strategy of the alcohol industry to recruit our young people into alcohol use. Our people need more and better protection against the greed and unethical practices of the alcohol industry in our country. Our communities need heightened awareness about the real effects of alcohol.

Mr. President, the current trends of alcohol use in Uganda pose a serious threat to the attainment of Uganda's 2040 Vision; a transformed Ugandan society from a peasant to a modern prosperous country within 30 years and compromises the country's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and the Agenda 2030.

We support the government's strategy that aligns interventions to reduce alcohol harm with WHO's recommendations.

We call on you, Your Excellency, to take urgent action for health and development:

1. For the government to better support civil society and research initiatives for prevention and reduction of alcohol harm.

2. For the government to fast-track formulation and operationalization of the evidence-based effective National Alcohol Control Policy and the revision of the Alcohol Law.
3. For the government to be the stronghold against vested interests to protect and promote children's wellbeing and everyone's right to health.
4. For the government to help raise awareness of the magnitude and extent of alcohol-related harm, across other health and development problems.

We stand ready to amplify the government's commitment in the communities we serve. Let's unite to generate action on alcohol, commensurate with the burden it puts on our societies, communities and families.

Yours sincerely,

Conference Chairs

UAPA

EAAPA

IOGT NTO Movement

Conference participants

Thursday November 29th, 2018.

CC. Prime Minister, Government of Uganda

CC. Chancellor Makerere University