

Reply to the WHO Consultation on Options for Strengthening and Facilitating Multisectoral Action for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases through Partnership

03/04/2012

IOGT International, the largest worldwide community of non-governmental organizations with the vision and mission to independently enlighten people around the world on a lifestyle free from alcohol and other drugs, has closely followed the global political and research processes to prevent and control the burden of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). To come to terms with NCDs prevention and control we have seen momentum building up ever since the Moscow Declaration from the first global Ministerial Conference on healthy lifestyles and NCDs control, in April 2011. The political will of Member States to take action for the prevention and control of NCDs became clear when the United Nations high-level meeting on NCDs prevention and control – the meeting in September 2011 only being the second time in history of the UN that the General Assembly meets on a health issue – adopted a political declaration on the prevention and control of NCDs.

IOGT International has been contributing to these processes both on international level, and on regional and national level, through our member organizations to share with relevant institutions our expertise, knowledge and first-hand experiences and evidence of the problems and burden NCDs put on societies all over the world.

Conflict of Interests in efforts to prevent Non-Communicable Diseases

Part of IOGT International's commitment to preventing and controlling NCDs was also to be a signatory and to mobilize broad support for the Conflicts of Interest Coalition Statement of Concern in advance to the UN high level meeting in September 2011.

As long as there are economic profit interests in increased consumption of products that are enormous risk factors for Non-Communicable Diseases – like among others alcohol and tobacco – it will be impossible to meaningfully engage these kinds of industries in policy processes that necessarily have to take measures to decrease consumption.

IOGT International is concerned about this conflict of public health and societal development interests of member states and regions all over the world on the one hand and economic profit interests of affected industries on the other hand.

Therefore we once more want to emphasize that:

Clarity is needed regarding the role of the private, profit-driven sector in public policy-making in relation to preventing and controlling NCDs.

Preventing and controlling NCDs is a public health, social and economic issue for societies all over the world. Policy decisions thus should be taken based on the best interest for the citizens of the respective society – in order to improve productivity, well-being, social capital and the ability of communities and societies at large to solve problems and move towards a better future.

We call for the development of a Code of Conduct and Ethical Framework to help protect the integrity of, and to ensure transparency in, public policy decision-making, by safeguarding against, identifying and eliminating conflicts of interests.

IOGT International has experience of more than 160 years of work in policy areas of public health, social affairs, and Human Rights and thus we know that evidence-based policy decisions of Member States to prevent and control NCDs do have positive impact on the productivity of the society, the well-being of citizens and communities, the social capital at large and the ability of communities and societies in general to move towards a better future – if the Best Interest of Children, as Member

States have themselves committed to when ratifying the Convention of the Rights of the Child, is given primary consideration.

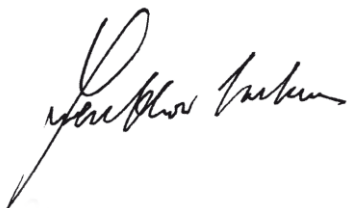
Alcohol industry profit interests versus public health and societal development interests

There is a strong link between alcohol and NCDs, particularly cancer, cardiovascular disease, liver disease, pancreatitis and diabetes. All scientific evidence supports calls by the WHO and other global bodies to implement evidence-based policies to prevent alcohol related harm. Of the global NCD-related burden of deaths, net years of life lost (YLL) and net disability adjusted life years (DALYs), 3,4%, 5% and 2,4% respectively can be attributed to alcohol consumption. Therefore the World Bank for example recommends measures like “increase taxes”, “ban advertising” and “restrict access”.

In the face of this evidence and these recommendations IOGT International is keen on emphasizing:

The global alcohol industry has a track record of promoting ineffective and costly policy measures, as well as advertising their products aggressively in countries all over the world. Therefore, IOGT International and our members across the world have the concern that the alcohol industry or their front organizations should not be part of any public-private partnerships or policy formulations processes.

The WHO Expert Committee on Problems Related to Alcohol Consumption (Geneva, 10-13 October 2006) point out that significant commercial interests are involved in promoting alcohol's manufacture, distribution, pricing and sale. The WHO Expert Committee cautioned that the private sector should not be trying to do the work of governments, which are properly the guardians of the public interest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sven-Olov Carlsson'.

Sven-Olov Carlsson

International President

IOGT International, Stockholm, April 03, 2012