

Alcohol A Major Obstacle To Economic And Societal Development In Africa – But Will East African Community Respond Properly?

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Press release by East African Alcohol Policy Alliance, RADAPA and IOGT International on the occasion of the 4th EAC Health and Scientific Conference for 27-29 March 2013 in Kigali

The main theme of the three-day Conference is: Regional Health Priorities and Opportunities: Evidence for Action in the Changing Global Financial Situation.

"We and our members from all over the EAC think it is great that this conference takes place and that it is already the fourth time it is being held," says Moses Waweru, Chairman of the East African Alcohol Policy Alliance (EAAPA). "We need to come together and discuss obstacles to our development, and we need more research and evidence."

"But we also need to make sure that these types of conferences manage to address a comprehensive approach to regional health priorities," says Aimable Mwananawe, Chairperson of RADAPA. "In that sense I hope that this conference is not a missed opportunity to address alcohol harm and its impact in the EAC."

The Conference has four sub-themes: Achieving the MDGs for Maternal and Child Health; Non-Communicable Diseases and Trauma; Health Systems Strengthening and Quality of Health Care. Five symposiums are also planned, covering subjects of: HIV/ AIDS, sexual and gender based violence, disaster preparedness and tobacco control.

"We agree that sub-themes as well as symposiums are highly relevant. However, we also feel that something might be missing," says Ms. Kristina Sperkova, Vice President of IOGT International. "Just last week the WHO Africa Stakeholders Dialogue on NCDs clearly showed that alcohol definitely had the biggest attention in the discussions."

"In the dire state of the global financial situation, alcohol policies are best buys to improve health and propel societal and economic development because they are cost-effective and have positive impact on many different issues that challenge the EAC today," says Moses Waweru of EAAPA. "Knowing all this, EAAPA invites EAC and governments of the Member States to work together on alcohol issues. Together we can find high-impact and cost-effective responses to the alcohol harm in our region."

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The East African Alcohol Policy Alliance (EAAPA) is an alliance of civil society organizations across East Africa working together to build a comprehensive system of evidence-based policy, legislation and regulatory measures to address alcohol related harms

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RADAPA network

RADAPA is an advocacy & lobbying network working towards evidence-based policies and laws on Alcohol and drug abuse for the nation of Rwanda

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IOGT International is the largest worldwide community of non-governmental organisations with a mission to independently enlighten people around the world on a lifestyle free from alcohol and other drugs.

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