



**Don't Poison Our Rights**

**08.03.2019**

***Dear International Women's Day organizers,  
Dear Aurora Ventures (Europe) Limited,***

I hope my letter finds you well and I hope this day, today, truly rocks. We, IOGT International, are certainly dedicated to contribute our part to lasting impact of International Women's Day. And we have been for more than 160 years.

I'm writing to you on behalf of a global movement whose members have been fighting for women's rights literally since the very beginning of the struggle for women's voting rights. It's a follow-up letter form last year, since you never responded to our serious concerns.

I'm addressing you again today to express our grave concern about the fact that the alcohol industry is allowed to sponsor your endeavor, International Women's Day. Diageo, the world's second largest liquor producer, is listed among the "International Women's Day 2018 Supporters" on your official website.[1]

With all due respect, this is an appalling partnership. It's an ill-advised partnership. And it is an incompatible partnership laden with conflicts of interest concerning the goals and objectives of International Women's Day.

- A New York Times Op-Ed laid out how liquor makers were actively and ruthlessly working against women's voting rights.[2]
- Several decades of alcohol marketing have fueled a culture of sexualization, de-humanization and objectification of women.[3]



To:  
Aurora Ventures (Europe) Limited  
Quadrant House,  
4 Thomas More Square London E1W 1YW,  
United Kingdom

- In recent years, the alcohol industry has discovered women and girls as “emerging market” to drive corporate profits and is aggressively targeting women to hook them on their products.[4]
- The alcohol industry produces, distributes, sells and markets products that are extremely harmful to women and girls: addiction, liver cirrhosis among young women breast cancer, gender-based violence, including domestic and sexual abuse, or HIV/ AIDS are just some of the alcohol-fueled problems massively affecting women.[5]
- Evidence-based and cost-effective public health policies that would help address and solve these problems and thus advance gender equality are routinely blocked, derailed and undermined by the alcohol industry, including Diageo.[6]
- Women's voices, especially also from the global South, that demand change and call for action to curb Big Alcohol and hold the alcohol industry accountable for fueling Women's Rights abuses, remain side-lined and ignored. [7]

In my view, these six points give a quick overview of the vast conflict of interest at work in partnering with the alcohol industry. The evidence, examples and stories behind each of these points should make the case clear: the alcohol industry has no role to play in the feminist cause.

I'm painfully aware that Diageo and other alcohol producers are trying to rewrite history by pushing messages about their efforts for women. Diageo's Jane Walker marketing stunt is just the latest example.

These efforts by the alcohol industry are nothing but cynical attempts to usurp positive values of women empowerment for corporate profits. It's an outright attack on reality and history.

As women fought more than a century ago to protect themselves, their families and communities from raging alcohol harm, so are they fighting today. Back then the struggle took place in the United States, Sweden, UK or Germany.

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These days similar campaigns are being fought in India, Kenya and Brazil. Same fight, different places, and same foe – the alcohol industry.

This year's International Women's Day theme is "balance for better". The alcohol industry, like Diageo, is poisoning women's rights, gender equality and female empowerment. Gender equality can only be achieved if we do not compromise our feminist goals and objectives by pink-washing a predatory industry as "supporters" when they in reality undermine and jeopardize our feminist cause. I am deeply concerned about this partnership and its implications for the goals of the feminist movement.

Don't allow Big Alcohol to usurp feminist values. Stop the pink-washing. Stop Big Alcohol from exploiting women and girls. Don't poison our rights.

I therefore respectfully request that you end the partnership with Diageo and that you revise your partnership policies based on the lessons learned from this case to ensure that no alcohol company will be able to partner with the International Women's Day in the future.

I look forward to finally discussing the issue with you and remain at your disposal.

Yours sincerely,

**Kristina Sperkova**

*International President, IOGT International,  
Stockholm, 08 March 2019*

Note: All references can be [found here](#).