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**African, European Communities Denounce European
Union External Action Collusion with Big Alcohol, Make
3 Requests for Change**

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- Joint Open Letter to European and Africa Leaders -

**Civil society concern about European Union External Action request of
the alcohol industry to interfere in a sovereign country's public policy
making**
February 18, 2021

Addressed to:

H.E. Dr. Ursula von der Leyen, President, European Commission,
H.E. Josep Borrell Fontelles, EU High Representative/Vice President,
H.E. Jutta Urpilainen, Commissioner, International Partnerships,
H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson, African Union Commission,
H.E. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, President, Republic of South Africa.

Dear excellencies,

It is with utmost respect that we send you this letter.

We are community-based and civil society groups from Africa, Europe and around the world and we wish to express our deep concern about revelations that the European Union External Action is encouraging and even part-funding the alcohol industry to interfere in public policy making of a sovereign country, in this particular case South Africa.

The e-mail from the European Union's representation in South Africa to European alcohol producers and their lobby front groups seeking to make profits in Africa is very disturbing.

It is grossly irresponsible and reckless on the part of the European Union External Action to be offering part-funding and encouraging joint activities around alcohol policy in South Africa, clearly trying to supplant and subvert the role of an African government which has been doing well in trying to contain COVID-19 through evidence-based alcohol policy solutions, including temporary alcohol sales bans.

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Considering the lethal interaction between alcohol and the coronavirus pandemic specifically and in general alcohol's role as a major obstacle to development, the revealed plans of the European Union External Action to collude with the alcohol industry are appalling.

As communities from around the world, we stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in South Africa and across the African continent where the products and practices of the alcohol industry are wreaking havoc.

1. Together, we call on the European Union External Action to apologize to the people of South Africa.
2. Together, we urge the European Union External Action to terminate any effort to support and coordinate with the alcohol industry to interfere in public policy making aimed at protecting people from the harms and suffering the alcohol industry is causing.
3. Together we request the European Union and its Member States to end subsidizing the alcohol industry and their unethical business practices in Africa and around the world.

Multinational alcohol corporations, many of which are headquartered in Europe, have been exposed for their long track record of unethical business conduct and for numerous cases of derailing, delaying and destroying initiatives to protect African communities and societies from alcohol harm.

The e-mail of the collusion between the European Union External Action and Big Alcohol against the people of South Africa provides insights into activities that are likely taking place in other African countries.

It is very disturbing that the European Union External Action – especially during the raging global pandemic – seeks to advance private profit interests over public health and the well-being of the people of South Africa, by protecting the commercial interests of its multinational alcohol giants at the expense of sustainable development of South African society.

- Africa is already the region with the disproportionately greatest burden of alcohol harm, even though the majority of the adult population in African countries does not consume alcohol.

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- In South Africa the combined tangible and intangible costs of alcohol harm to the economy reached nearly 300 billion rand or 10 to 12% of the 2009 GDP.
- 65% of women experiencing intimate partner violence in Uganda, Zimbabwe and South Africa reported that the perpetrator had used alcohol.

The products and practices of the alcohol industry in the African region have been projected to fuel rising alcohol harm. It would mean that gains made in South Africa in containing the spread of COVID-19 will be reversed. In the even larger picture, it will mean that the targets of the sustainable development goals will remain out of reach for African countries.

Therefore, we call on political leaders in South Africa and across the African continent to reject alcohol industry interference. We are with you in standing up to attempts which undermine and derail legitimate efforts to prevent and reduce alcohol harm thus promoting development and health for all.

Yours sincerely,

Tungamirai Zimonte, Board member, Movendi International, Zimbabwe

Kristina Sperkova, International President, Movendi International, Slovakia

Tiziana Codenotti, President, European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare), Brussels, Belgium

Philip Chimponda, Chairperson, Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance (SAAPA)

Bongi Ndong, Chairperson, SAAPA South Africa

Thabo Mokhutsoane, Chairperson, and Mthobi Molefi, Country Coordinator, Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance – Lesotho Chapter

Chief Masimba Biriwasha, Chairperson, SAAPA Zimbabwe

Prisca Mokgadi, Chairperson, SAAPA Botswana

Willemina Mberira, Chairperson, SAAPA Namibia

Siyanda Makhubo, Strategy and Communications Secretary, Independent Order of True Templars (I.O.T.T.), South Africa, Northern Botswana and Zimbabwe

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