

## **Fourth World Health Organization (WHO) Forum on alcohol, drugs, and addictive behaviours**

**Geneva, 27 June 2023**

### **Statement for the high-level segment on “Public health dimensions of alcohol, drug use and addictive behaviours: taking stock of the past and looking into the future”.**

Distinguished delegates,

Thank you for the opportunity to make this intervention on behalf of NCD Alliance, a global civil society network dedicated to improving noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) prevention and control worldwide.

In September, Heads of State and Government will be meeting in New York for the second UN High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) to renew commitments and action to improve health for all. We are calling on governments to commit to addressing alcohol use and NCD prevention as a core element to be integrated in national UHC benefit packages. Moreover, alcohol taxes provide a potential opportunity to raise revenue for UHC. NCD Alliance supports the RESET initiative advocating for alcohol taxation in different geographies.

Words and framing matter – we welcome the European Framework for Action on Alcohol 2022–2025 for using the language ‘alcohol harm’ as evidence shows there is no safe level of alcohol consumption. We must further align language in global alcohol policy with the latest evidence and years of concerns raised by many Member States and experts by consistently referring to “alcohol use and harm”.

The practices by commercial actors continue to pose a challenge to public health – it is therefore imperative to protect NCD policy processes from alcohol industry’s influence. We are hoping the upcoming decision-making tool on private sector engagement by WHO’s Global Coordination Mechanism on NCDs will provide guidance to avoid the undue influence from alcohol industry.

Policy areas relevant across NCD risk factors like labelling, marketing and fiscal measures provide opportunities to share best practices and work collaboratively with other stakeholders in the health space. For instance, alcohol brands use similar tactics to the tobacco industry to market their products to young people.

Ireland recently signed a law to implement alcohol labelling and health warnings – this is a milestone as labelling is a policy area that has seen more progress on tobacco and foodstuff. We are calling on governments to implement the updated NCD Appendix 3 (also known as the NCD ‘best buys’ and other recommended interventions) as a cost-effective policy package, finding synergies in implementing public health policies across NCD risk factors.

As we look forward to the 2<sup>nd</sup> High-Level Meeting on UHC and the 4<sup>th</sup> HLM on NCDs in 2025, we call for the accelerated implementation of WHO’s new Alcohol Global Action Plan, based on the SAFER technical package and the alcohol ‘best buys’ and other recommended interventions.

Thank you.