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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social
Development and the twenty-fourth special session
of the General Assembly: priority theme: strategies
for the eradication of poverty to achieve sustainable
development for all**

Statement submitted by IOGT International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

IOGT International is the premier global network for community-based interventions and evidence-based policies to prevent and reduce harm caused by alcohol and other drugs.

We are committed to partner with you to creating environments in which everyone is empowered to live up to their fullest potential. Our work seeks to promote human and planetary health along with active citizenship.

The 2030 Agenda is a remarkable achievement. But envisioning its realization through the lens of the most deprived, marginalized and vulnerable populations on our planet, we clearly see massive obstacles for eradicating poverty and achieving progress for all.

The evidence is unmistakable: Harmful use of alcohol is a cross-cutting obstacle for achieving the sustainable development for all, as it adversely impacts 13 out of 17 SDGs.

For instance: Pervasive alcohol harm causes poverty, hunger and malnutrition, as well as ill-health and premature deaths. Alcohol harm erodes economic productivity, threatens women's empowerment and gender equality, puts the development of our children and youth into peril, contributes to unsafe public spaces and jeopardizes water and food security.

- Alcohol kills 3.3 million people worldwide every year. This represents 5.9 % of all deaths.
- Alcohol consumption causes death and disability relatively early in life. In the age group 20 to 39 years approximately 25% of total deaths are alcohol-attributable.
- Alcohol is the leading risk factor for death and disability among people aged 15 to 49 years worldwide. This is the age range in which people are typically at their most productive economically.
- There's a causal relationship between alcohol and mental health disorders, infectious diseases like TB and HIV/ AIDS and Non-communicable diseases like cancer and heart disease.

In light of this reality and in the context of the 2018 theme of the Commission for Social Development, IOGT International calls on governments and the UN system to take bold steps in tackling alcohol harm as a major but under-recognized cause of poverty.

We cannot wait any longer.

Simply put: alcohol harm is a Human Rights and sustainable development issue.

Alcohol also fuels the vicious cycle of poverty, alcohol problems, ill-health and deprivation. Alcohol has various adverse effects on people's economic status while economic status in turn affects alcohol use in many ways. Alcohol can push people into poverty and lock them, their families and entire communities there over generations. The direct costs of alcohol harm to the household are often considerable and frequently underestimated — and put a big burden on development.

For example, in Latin America, alcohol has become the leading cause of male death and disability threatening further progress and sustainable development.

An example for Sri Lanka shows that over 10% of male respondents reported spending as much as or more than their regular income on alcohol.

These facts make the simple message urgent: Harmful use of alcohol is a threat to our shared goal of eradicating poverty in all its forms.

But what could strategies be to address this problem?

The good news is that science tells us what works: We have evidence-based, high-impact and cost-effective policy measures that can prevent and reduce alcohol harm and its burden on sustainable human development.

The so-called Three Best Buys of alcohol policy as described by World Bank, World Health Organization, UNDP and World Economic Forum (among others), can help foster transformative change in our efforts to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development.

Alcohol policy measures such as alcohol taxation, advertising bans and availability regulations should play a solid role in the global, regional, national and local efforts to achieve the SDGs.

We have the evidence. We have the policy tools. Now we need political will and leadership to take bold action for the benefit of the most deprived and vulnerable.
