
WHO DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF ECONOMIC OPERATORS IN ALCOHOL PRODUCTION AND TRADE ON WAYS THEY COULD CONTRIBUTE TO REDUCING THE HARMFUL USE OF ALCOHOL: IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON ALCOHOL PRODUCTION, MARKETING, DISTRIBUTION AND SALES

VIRTUAL MEETING ORGANIZED IN TWO SESSIONS WITH THE SAME AGENDA

DATE: 10 DECEMBER 2020

TIME: first session - 8.30-11.00 Geneva time (7.30-10.00 UTC); second session - 14.00-16.30
Geneva time (13.00-15.30 UTC)

Scope and Purpose

In May 2010, the Sixty-third World Health Assembly endorsed the Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol (more information is available on the website: <https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/alcohol-drugs-and-addictive-behaviours/>). Paragraph 48i of the strategy states that the WHO Secretariat will provide support to Member States by continuing its dialogue with the private sector on how they best can contribute to the reduction of alcohol-related harm while considering commercial interests involved and their possible conflict with public health objectives. Further, paragraph 45d of the strategy refers to the role of economic operators in reducing the harmful use of alcohol through self-regulatory actions and initiatives and by making available data on sales and consumption of alcoholic beverages.

Further, the political declaration of the 2018 United Nations Third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) encourages economic operators in the area of alcohol production and trade, as appropriate, to contribute to reducing the harmful use of alcohol in their core areas, taking into account national religious and cultural contexts, and to take concrete steps towards eliminating the marketing, advertising and sales of alcoholic products to minors.

The novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak and associated prevention measures undertaken by countries have a wide-ranging impact on all areas of life, including alcohol use patterns in affected populations, regulations regarding alcohol marketing, distribution and sales, service provision for health conditions due to alcohol use. The global impact of COVID-19 on the levels and patterns of alcohol consumption and related health consequences will be assessed and evaluated over time, and that has significant importance for reconstructing time-series data on alcohol consumption and related harms. Besides, COVID-19 has exacerbated pre-existing shortcomings of responses to health emergencies and

prompted large-scale efforts to identify and summarize lessons learned by different stakeholders to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 and increase preparedness of societies to respond effectively and efficiently to future health emergencies.

This 2020 dialogue is a continuation of a dialogue process between the WHO Secretariat and economic operators in alcohol production and trade initiated after the endorsement of the Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol. The current dialogue is organized around one main focus area: the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on alcohol production, marketing, distribution and sales. The dialogue will also include a session on preparing for the 2021 dialogue with economic operators in alcohol production and trade. The 2021 dialogue will focus on specific calls upon economic operators to contribute to reducing the harmful use of alcohol within their core roles as developers, producers, distributors, marketers and sellers of alcoholic beverages.

The dialogue does not imply collaboration or partnership between WHO and economic operators in alcohol beverage production, marketing and distribution. However, the outcomes of the dialogue will be taken into consideration in WHO's efforts to reduce the harmful use of alcohol in the context of implementation of the relevant WHO global and regional strategies and action plans and achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 health targets.
