



# COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR RESPONSIBLE DRINKING (IARD) TO THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT, 2020

*IARD is supported by 12 of the leading global beer, wine, and spirits producers, who come together in their common purpose of being part of the solution to reducing the harmful use of alcohol.*

We fully support the UN call for a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and, together with our members, we are committed to contributing to this. We recognize our responsibilities and are determined to find actionable and achievable solutions that can be tailored to local needs. Our initiatives continue to fully support and promote the United Nations Global Compact, and our mission is in accord with its guiding principles. We continue our work to reduce harmful drinking – promoting partnerships, evidence-based policies, and effective programs – as a contribution to economic and social development and to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



We believe that beer, wine, and spirits producers, in partnership with public and civil society sectors, are uniquely placed to help deliver sustainable growth, development, and improved health, as part of a whole-of-society approach. We recognize that our work is most effective when delivered in partnership with others.

Our Members remain committed to continuing work in line with the Five Commitments and the 10 action areas set out in their **Producers' Commitments (2013-17)**. They are also developing and implementing new actions that can be undertaken both collectively and as individual companies to further reduce the harmful use of alcohol and respond effectively to priority issues at a local, national, and global level.

To this end, in January 2020, we announced a new set of actions to combat underage drinking. This included a commitment from our members to feature age-restriction symbols or equivalent words on all of their alcohol brand products – including alcohol-free extensions of alcohol brands – sending a clear message to all communities that beer, wine, and spirits should not be bought or consumed by minors. This is an especially important area of focus for IARD, as the Political Declaration of the 3rd High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (2018) challenged industry to take concrete steps towards eliminating advertising, marketing, and sales to minors.

Recognizing the growing importance of digital communications, IARD Members are taking further action to prevent minors from seeing or interacting with their brands online – building on a unique partnership with leading digital platforms announced last year. IARD Members also invited online retailers and others to work with them to develop global standards for the online sale and delivery of alcohol (more details follow later in this letter).

The COVID-19 pandemic brought sudden and dramatic changes to our lives and lifestyles. We accelerated our work on developing standards for e-commerce in response to increases in online sales and delivery of alcohol; responsible e-commerce is more important than ever. The closure of restaurants, bars, and cafes has impacted economies, but losing these gathering spaces has also affected our mental health and social well-being, with people around the world facing uncertainty and isolation.

All this means that our work to reduce the harmful use of alcohol is even more urgent. We will keep striving towards this goal, bringing together key stakeholders to do so, in our ultimate aim of improving the health and wellbeing of people around the world.



Henry Ashworth

## ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR RESPONSIBLE DRINKING (IARD)

IARD<sup>1</sup> is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to addressing harmful drinking worldwide. IARD is supported by its member companies from all sectors of the regulated alcohol industry – beer, wine, and spirits – in their common purpose of being part of the solution to reducing the harmful use of alcohol. To achieve this, we work with public sector, civil society, and private stakeholders.



IARD actively supports international goals to reduce harmful drinking, including the targets in United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.5, and the World Health Organization's (WHO) "Noncommunicable Diseases (NCD) Global Monitoring Framework" of reducing the harmful use of alcohol by at least 10% by 2025. Our member companies also work towards a broad range of SDGs and are determined to promote sustainable development for all.

## COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

IARD remains dedicated to supporting the continued focus by the United Nations on reducing the harmful use of alcohol, which is

included in the SDGs. Furthermore, the Political Declaration of the 3rd High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (2018) recognized that beer, wine, and spirits producers have an important role in contributing to the achievement of the SDGs<sup>2</sup>. IARD is determined and committed to deliver positive change, specifically in reducing the harmful use of alcohol and in responding to the challenge laid out in the Political Declaration. We note that – despite notable progress in reducing the harmful use of alcohol in many regions of the world – the WHO Executive Board resolution, *Accelerating action to reduce the harmful use of alcohol*<sup>3</sup>, adopted in February 2020, expresses continued concern regarding the health burden of the harmful use of alcohol globally. This resolution emphasizes the need to address youth exposure to alcohol marketing.

These challenges are further exacerbated and complicated by the unprecedented situation brought about by the global COVID-19 pandemic and related economic crises. People everywhere are facing the largest public health crisis in living memory, economic and financial insecurity, and general uncertainty, which are impacting mental and physical health and well-being. As treasured gathering places like cafés, bars, and restaurants adapt to accommodate critical safety measures, the economic impact of measures designed to slow the spread of COVID-19 affects businesses up and down the supply chain. Beer, wine, and spirits are enjoyed by many people globally and – for those who choose to drink – we are committed to ensuring their consumption in the safest way possible, during these challenging times.

Our members are continuing constructive dialogue with experts, international organizations, civil society, and national governments during this challenging time to better understand the current nature of consumption and to best address the harmful use that may occur as a result of these extraordinary circumstances.



1. <https://www.iard.org/>

2. [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/2](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/2) para 44

3. [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/EB146/B146\(14\)-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB146/B146(14)-en.pdf)

As we eventually emerge from this pandemic, we will continue to lead this work to better understand what can be done to raise standards and protect lives, livelihoods, and communities.

However, there is still a long road ahead of us and new sets of challenges are certain to arise. IARD's members are well-positioned to respond and adapt as needs change because of their global supply chains, strong manufacturing capabilities, and employment potential. They are determined to keep contributing to the fight against COVID-19 and helping protect communities across the world, as part of a whole-of-society approach.

We are currently undertaking a listening exercise through independently convened dialogues with stakeholders from public health, academia, and a range of private sector actors, to inform future global actions for our industry. These dialogues work to identify areas of potential action where IARD members can take further action to create and raise standards to curtail the harmful use of alcohol, ultimately helping to lead to better health outcomes worldwide.

We believe this work can promote a virtuous circle of growth and better health, contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

## IARD INITIATIVES

Sustainable development, resilient societies, and a reduction in harmful drinking will be more readily achieved when all sectors work together locally, nationally, and globally to leverage and support each other's respective strengths. To this end, IARD and our members are supporting and creating the following initiatives:

### **IARD Members' digital platform commitment and social media toolkits**

Recalling the Political Declaration's call to producers to "take concrete steps, where relevant, to eliminate the marketing, advertising, and sale of alcohol products to minors", IARD Members announced they will continue to establish **new standards of marketing responsibility**. Together, we want to make it easy for even the smallest producer to implement effective safeguards to prevent minors from seeing alcohol marketing online.

**"Take concrete steps, where relevant, to eliminate the marketing, advertising, and sale of alcohol products to minors."**

The Political Declaration's call to producers.

We also want to give people greater control over whether they see alcohol-related marketing online. Respecting adults' personal preferences and cultural differences are important considerations that require the same level of sensitivity and action as preventing minors seeing alcohol marketing online.

As digital communications and social media have surged in popularity, especially among minors, IARD recognized the need to ensure alcohol marketing messages do not reach an underage audience. We have a unique role as a convener and facilitator in creating effective safeguards. To do this, IARD brought our member companies together with the world's most prominent digital media platforms – Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, and YouTube – to create an innovative partnership.



IARD Members are implementing age screening on online channels, complemented by specific and platform-appropriate technology to help ensure marketing messages reach only those over the legal purchase age. As a result of this partnership, we continue to improve these protections and will roll out safeguards that help ensure that all new alcohol-related channels or campaigns only reach adults who wish to interact with our companies' brands. This partnership will continue to work on emerging areas, such as among social influencers.

IARD is also committed to helping our members ensure that their online alcohol marketing communications meet the same high standards that apply to traditional marketing activities. IARD worked with the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) to produce a **series of**

**videos** that will help all beer, wine and spirits producers – whether an IARD member or not – and their agencies to implement effective safeguards to prevent minors from seeing alcohol marketing online.

### **Actions to accelerate reductions in underage drinking**

We do not want minors to drink alcohol, and we fully support regulation to set to legal purchase age. We have been working with communities to reduce underage drinking for many years, and we proactively support enforcement of regulation according to national and cultural context.

So in January 2020 – also in response to the challenges made to our sector in the 2018 Political Declaration – IARD Members announced **clear and direct actions aimed at accelerating efforts toward eliminating underage drinking**.

To best ensure that minors are protected, IARD Members will introduce clear age-restriction symbols or the equivalent words on all their products, including alcohol-free extensions of alcohol brands<sup>4</sup>, and will commit to refraining from marketing alcohol-free extensions of alcohol brands to minors. Additionally, **members will put safeguards in places for at least 95% of online alcohol marketing by 2024**.

Our members are an important piece of this, but not the only one. To maximize these efforts as effectively as possible, IARD, working with our members, have invited will invite retailers, wholesalers, and distributors to intensify their work with our members to determine how best-practice initiatives relating to age verification can be implemented globally. As online retail plays a growing role in this space and has increased tremendously in many places, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, IARD is inviting online retailers, postal services, and delivery companies to join our members, and will bring together other players with varied expertise to create positive change together.

### **IARD Members are taking action against COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health and societal emergency that presents unique and urgent challenges. IARD Members have stepped up to contribute during this time of crisis, using their unique resources and positioning to help through a variety of initiatives.

All IARD members are helping to address the global shortage of hand sanitizer. Also, they are all supporting workers in the hospitality industry, many of whom are facing financial hardship and job losses due to the pandemic. IARD Members are also working in partnership with governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to deliver help where it is most needed.

IARD member companies are helping fight COVID-19 globally by taking actions on six continents, with initiatives including: \*

- Supplying over **700 million bottles\*\*** of hand sanitizers 
- Support for the hospitality industry totaling over **\$125 million** 
- Additional financial contributions totaling over **\$40 million** with the majority directed towards healthcare, research, and community relief efforts 

### **CEO Communique on reopening post-COVID crisis**

To support the reopening of the hospitality sector across the world, IARD Members are working with retailers and other business partners to support appropriate physical distancing measures. Members are also using their marketing, promotion of responsible service, and server training programs to help prevent harmful drinking from threatening the safe and sociable atmosphere that communities want to enjoy.

\*The figures and actions throughout the case study are accurate as of July 31, 2020.

\*\*For this calculation, bottle size has been standardized to 250 ml.

4. IARD Members will start to roll this out immediately, with compliance across all markets by 2024.



In addition, member companies are further accelerating the efforts announced in January 2020 to develop global e-commerce standards and safeguards for online marketing, sales, and delivery.

## CREATING EVIDENCE-BASED RESOURCES

IARD produces resources for policy makers and researchers on alcohol and health. Our work is informed by the latest scientific evidence on alcohol and health, including alcohol policy. We examine best practice around policies and interventions that reduce harmful drinking by bringing together data and research on drinking patterns, alcohol in society, and regulations at a national level. Our tools and resources are intended to support practitioners in formulating approaches that can be adapted to local needs and contexts.

### Examining trends in harmful drinking: IARD's "Trends Report" series

The three reports in this series examine data on trends in heavy episodic drinking, underage drinking, and drink driving. Each report explores how partnerships among private and public sectors and communities – underpinned by appropriate regulation – can support reductions in these different types of harmful drinking, and showcases how our members have partnered with communities, civil society, and NGOs in a whole-of-society approach against the harmful use of alcohol.

## THE TRENDS REPORT SERIES

*Trends Report: Heavy Episodic Drinking*

*Trends Report: Underage Drinking*

*Trends Report: Drink Driving*

### Focus on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): Case Studies

Partnership and collaboration are required to meet the ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as the goals of the WHO Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs). The Report of the WHO Independent High-level Commission on NCDs

also notes the importance of PPPs, largely because progress on the achievement of NCD goals has been limited. The Commission says that "Public-private partnerships can be an important tool to contribute to effective NCD responses. It is important that conflicts of interests are adequately addressed, with transparency and focus required to ensure that public policies and public-private partnerships are in the public interest, provide public value, and do not undermine the sustainability of financing health systems."

IARD Members have worked in partnership with other bodies across the public and private sector, to help address these shared challenges. IARD showcased a range of these initiatives, from various countries and cultures, in its report: "*Focus on Public-Private Partnerships*".

### Health and Policy reviews

Our health and policy reviews offer a referenced overview of recent peer-reviewed, published research on the relationship between alcohol consumption and health outcomes. These reviews include the following topics:

*Drinking and cognitive function* (November 2019)

*Health warning labels on alcohol beverages*

(February 2019)

*Physical availability restrictions* (October 2018)

*Marketing of alcohol beverages* (July 2018)

*Drinking and cardiovascular disease* (July 2018)

### Gathering and Providing Regulatory Information

Our policy tables provide continuously updated information on regulations and government guidelines related to alcohol consumption around the world:

- Beverage alcohol labeling requirements
- Health warning labeling requirements
- Blood alcohol concentration (BAC) and breath alcohol concentration (BrAC) limits
- Minimum legal age limits
- Drinking guidelines for the general population
- Drinking guidelines for pregnancy and breastfeeding