

**MOVENDI INTERNATIONAL STATEMENT  
WHO SEARO RCM76 AGENDA ITEM 8.3****15/10/23**

Thank you, Honorable chairperson, dear delegates,

Promoting and protecting health is essential to human welfare and sustained economic and social development. Health for All is essential to achieve better quality of life, economic prosperity, and sustainable development.

The problem is that our health systems are strained to the brink by preventable health risk factors such as alcohol.

Globally, alcohol contributes to 20% of injuries in emergency department presentations. In some low- and middle-income countries 1 in 5 hospital beds are occupied due to alcohol harm.

Alcohol is a major and cross-cutting obstacle to universal health coverage and the SDGs. In our region, alcohol use and harm are rising, particularly among adolescents, youth and women. Our region is aggressively targeted by the alcohol industry driving up alcohol consumption for their own profits. The magnitude and severity of alcohol harm across the region is serious, especially concerning NCDs, HIV and TB, violence and road traffic injuries.

Costs due to pervasive alcohol harm undermine the strength, resilience, and capacity of health systems to provide care, prevent harm, and promote health. That's why alcohol policy in general and alcohol taxation in particular are powerful tools to help reach health for all by increasing fiscal space and reducing avoidable healthcare burden and spending.

Already in 2010, more than a decade ago, the WHO World Health Report presented the following evidence:

"Raising taxes on alcohol to 40% of the retail price could have an even bigger impact [than a 50% increase in tobacco taxation]."

“Estimates for 12 low-income countries show that consumption levels would fall by more than 10%, while tax revenues would more than triple to a level amounting to 38% of total health spending in those countries. “

Alcohol taxation, like other health promotion taxes, holds massive potential for achieving Universal Health Coverage. Alcohol taxation is a triple win measure:

- It helps reduce and prevent alcohol harm and costs,
- It helps promote equity and sustainable development, and
- It helps raise domestic resources for investment in health systems and health promotion.

Country best practices on how to improve health system functioning through alcohol policy exist and should be an integral part of the UHC discussions going forward.

Movendi International is ready to step up our support for countries in our region to accelerate alcohol policy action in general and to raise alcohol taxes in particular to help achieve UHC and the SDGs for the people of South-East Asia.

I thank you for your attention.

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