

## **KEYNOTE SPEECH: PROMOTING THE REALIZATION OF SDGS THROUGH ADDRESSING ALCOHOL MISUSE FOR SAFER FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

Good [morning/afternoon] esteemed colleagues, honored guests, and distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a true privilege to stand before you today, as we gather to discuss a matter of profound importance to our collective future—promoting the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while addressing the pervasive challenge of alcohol misuse.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a global framework to address pressing issues such as poverty, inequality, health, and peace. However, the realization of these goals is often hindered by underlying social and health challenges, among which alcohol misuse stands out as a significant barrier. Alcohol abuse has far-reaching consequences, impacting individual health, family well-being, community safety, and social stability. Moreover, it is a major driver of family violence, child abuse, and intimate partner violence, disproportionately affecting women and children. Addressing alcohol misuse is critical not only to improving public health but also goes a long way to advancing multiple SDGs, particularly **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being)**, **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)**, and **SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)**.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Let me emphasize that, addressing alcohol misuse is a fundamental element of achieving the SDGs, ensuring safer families, and building stronger, and more resilient communities. This therefore calls for a collective effort to tackle alcohol misuse as a key driver of societal harm and a barrier to sustainable development.

As you know, the SDGs represent a global blueprint for achieving a more equitable, sustainable, and peaceful world by 2030. These 17

interconnected goals address a broad range of social, economic, and environmental challenges, from eradicating poverty to ensuring quality education, from promoting gender equality to combating climate change. At their core, the SDGs call for a world that offers opportunities for all to thrive in a safe and healthy environment.

But how can we achieve this vision when issues like alcohol misuse continue to undermine our efforts?

To answer this question well, we must address ourselves to the Intersection between Alcohol Misuse and the SDGs:

Alcohol misuse, in all its forms, affects millions of people globally. According to the World Health Organization, alcohol is responsible for approximately 3 million deaths each year, accounting for nearly 5% of the global burden of disease and injury. Beyond the personal health impacts, alcohol misuse contributes to family violence, child abuse, domestic violence, and impaired relationships—factors that undermine the stability and safety of families and communities.

### **Let us explore how alcohol misuse intersects with key SDGs:**

#### **1. SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being**

Alcohol misuse is a major driver of preventable diseases, including liver disease, cancers, and mental health disorders. It is linked to road traffic accidents and violence, placing immense pressure on healthcare systems and reducing overall well-being. To achieve SDG 3, we must prioritize prevention, treatment, and harm reduction in relation to alcohol

#### **2. SDG 5: Gender Equality**

Alcohol misuse exacerbates gender-based violence and disproportionately affects women and children. Women who are in relationships where alcohol abuse is present are more likely to experience

intimate partner violence. By addressing alcohol misuse, we can reduce one of the root causes of violence against women and improve gender equality.

### **3. SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions**

Communities with high levels of alcohol misuse often face higher rates of crime, domestic violence, and lawlessness. By addressing alcohol abuse, we can help create safer, more peaceful communities where justice prevails and where citizens feel empowered to contribute to collective well-being.

So, how do we create safer families and communities, and promote the realization of the SDGs, by addressing alcohol misuse? The answer lies in a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach, that promotes change and joint effort.

#### **1. Prevention through Education and Awareness**

We must begin by educating people about the risks of alcohol misuse and creating public awareness campaigns that challenge cultural norms around drinking. Public health campaigns can shift attitudes, empower individuals to make healthier choices, and support the development of a culture of moderation. Schools, workplaces, and communities should all be places where knowledge about alcohol's impacts is readily available.

#### **2. Support for Families**

Families are the bedrock of any society, yet alcohol misuse can tear them apart. By supporting families through counseling, early intervention, and programs for addiction treatment, we can create safer, healthier environments where children can grow and thrive. This includes access to mental health services, as alcohol misuse often co-occurs with mental health conditions.

### **3. Stronger Regulation and Policy Frameworks**

By enacting stronger regulations on alcohol advertising, setting stricter legal limits on alcohol sales, and ensuring better access to treatment programs, government can reduce the prevalence of alcohol misuse. Increasing the legal drinking age, regulating alcohol content, and promoting the responsible sale of alcohol are just a few of the measures that can make a difference.

### **4. Community-Based Programs and Support Networks**

Local communities are often the first to feel the impacts of alcohol misuse. Community-driven initiatives, such as support groups, alcohol-free recreational spaces, and mentorship programs, can provide individuals with the social support they need to overcome addiction. Community leaders, including religious and cultural leaders, have a powerful influence in shaping social norms and can lead efforts to reduce the stigma around seeking help.

### **5. Collaborating with Healthcare Providers**

Healthcare systems must be equipped to address alcohol misuse through screening, early intervention, and accessible treatment options. Integrating addiction services into primary healthcare settings makes it easier for individuals to receive help before their alcohol misuse leads to more severe consequences. Ensuring that healthcare providers are trained in identifying and managing alcohol-related issues is a critical step toward reducing alcohol-related harm.

### **The Call to Action**

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we move forward in our quest to realize the SDGs, let us remember that our success depends on the health and safety of every individual, family, and community. Addressing alcohol misuse will

not only address a health issue but will lay a critical foundation for creating a more just and equitable society. When we reduce alcohol misuse, we reduce the burdens of disease, violence, and poverty that stifle human potential and development.

I urge all of us here today—government, civil society organizations, healthcare providers, and individuals—to unite around this cause. Together, we can build a future where all people, regardless of their background or circumstances, can live in safe, supportive environments. Together, we can create a world that fully embraces the values of the SDGs.

### **Finally**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Let us commit today to work towards a world where alcohol misuse no longer undermines the safety of our families or the well-being of our communities. Let us be bold in our actions, compassionate in our support, and united in our vision for a healthier, safer and more sustainable world. The road to realizing the SDGs begins with each of us—and it starts now.

Thank you.

**For God and my country.**

