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ADIC Press Release

12 Recommendations from the Alcohol and Drug Information Center (ADIC) for Presidential Candidates on Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Control

As a nation, we face significant economic, health, and social challenges arising from alcohol and drug use. Alarmingly, smoking and alcohol consumption are responsible for nearly 100 premature deaths each day. Information from the Ministry of Health reveals that 8 out of 10 preventable deaths in Sri Lanka are caused by non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Notably, smoking and alcohol use account for 2 out of the 4 key factors contributing to these diseases.

In Sri Lanka, individuals spend 121 crore rupees daily on smoking and alcohol consumption. Smoking and alcohol use are no longer a source of income for the country. While the alcohol excise revenue for 2022 was 165 billion rupees, the health and economic costs associated with alcohol use that year totaled 237 billion rupees. (Source: Investment Case for Alcohol Control in Sri Lanka 2022 – UNDP)

Additionally, although the government collected 88 billion rupees in cigarette taxes in 2016, studies have shown that the health and economic costs of cigarette use amounted to 214 billion rupees. (Source: Investment Case for Alcohol Control in Sri Lanka 2022 – UNDP)

Therefore, the use of alcohol, cigarettes, and other drugs significantly impacts economic, health, and social issues. The government has the capacity to address these problems through the development and implementation of effective policies.

The presidential election to elect the 9th Executive President of the country is scheduled for September 21. In preparation for this, each presidential candidate will submit a manifesto. Our organization, the Alcohol and Drug Information Center (ADIC), which employs a scientific approach to reducing tobacco, alcohol, and drug use for the country's future development, proposes the following recommendations for inclusion in these manifestos. An extension has been provided to each candidate regarding this matter.

Suggestions and Recommendations for Controlling Tobacco, Alcohol, and Other Drug Problems

- 1. Implement a scientific tax formula that increases excise duties on alcohol and cigarettes each year, aligned with inflation and economic growth.**
- 2. Develop a systematic tax collection system to recover taxes already owed to the government by tobacco and alcohol companies, and to prevent such situations in the future.**
- 3. Enforce existing laws and policies to reduce alcohol and tobacco use and promotion, and expedite the adoption of proposed amendments to the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol Act.**
 - i. Implement the amendment to ban the sale of cigarettes individually (as one or two cigarettes)
 - ii. Implement the amendment prohibiting the operation of outlets selling cigarettes and alcohol within 100 meters of educational institutions or religious places.
 - iii. Implement the amendment to designate all public places as smoke and alcohol-free zones.
 - iv. Implement the amendment to ban all forms of promotion of cigarettes, alcohol, and other drugs in songs, albums, movies, teleplays, YouTube, Facebook, video chats, and other media, including the Internet.
 - v. Implement the amendment to prohibit the sale of all types of cigarettes, tobacco-related products, alcohol, and other drugs over the Internet.
 - vi. Enact amendments to classify offenses related to the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol Act as Cognisable offence (arrestable offence), and increase both fines and penalties for these violations.
 - vii. Enforce the law regarding the sale of smokeless tobacco products, as well as illegal alcohol and other drugs prohibited by law.
 - viii. Sponsorships by tobacco and alcohol companies are prohibited, yet violations persist. Take steps to prevent it.
 - ix. Prohibit both direct and indirect advertising of tobacco-related products through mainstream media and social media.
- 4. Cease the issuance of temporary liquor licenses and stop granting liquor licenses under the pretext of the tourism industry.**

- 5. Implement the National Policy on Alcohol Control, which was approved by the Cabinet in 2016.**
- 6. Enhance law enforcement to control illegal alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, and strengthen the institutions responsible for these efforts.**
- 7. Implement a national prevention program aimed at children and youth to discourage the use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, with the goal of preventing these behaviors before they become habitual.**
- 8. Prepare and implement counseling, treatment, and other support services to assist individuals struggling with alcohol use, and expand and enhance the "1948" Quit Line telephone counseling service to provide additional help for quitting smoking and alcohol use.**
- 9. Our country has signed the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), an international agreement/ treaties for tobacco control, and is committed to achieving its goals within the specified time frame.**
- 10. Introduce a licensing system for the sale of cigarettes and tobacco-related products, and prohibit the sale of these items without a valid license.**
- 11. Prevent interventions by the tobacco and alcohol industries that aim to weaken existing policies and block the introduction of new ones.**
- 12. To prevent the country from the trap of legalizing cannabis, educate the public about its harms, and enact and enforce new laws to address media promoting cannabis use.**

These recommendations are designed to enhance mechanisms for addressing the drug problem in Sri Lanka and to ensure the well-being of our citizens. The Alcohol and Drug Information Center (ADIC) hopes that the presidential candidates will support these recommendations and include them in their manifestos.

As the Alcohol and Drug Information Center (ADIC), we strongly emphasize that it is the responsibility of the future president to create an environment where all Sri Lankans can lead healthy, free, and happy lives, supported by the leadership and commitment to this program.

Alcohol and Drug Information Center (ADIC)