

# Open letter



Dear Sir, I am a student concerned with the rate of alcohol and substance abuse in Russia. Alcoholism has reached high peaks and has caused adverse impacts to the health of citizens due to non-natural death and the effects on the normal life expectancy. The current rate of alcohol consumption in Russia has tripled over the last decade, making Russia lead globally in alcohol consumption. Heavy drinking is on the increase in Russia since; many people who cannot afford Vodka can go to other hazardous substances such as homemade alcohol substitutes. In addition, heavy drinking among pregnant women has led increases in infant mortality, birth defects, childhood abnormalities, and disease. Your Excellency, it is a fact that cases of heavy drinking in Russia is dramatically increasing. This situation is reflected in the retail market in which the sale of alcohol has increased particularly among the younger generation. Heavy alcohol consumption accounts for accidents and illnesses that claim one in eight deaths annually. Among heavy drinkers, men are severely impacted upon, causing a reduction in life expectancy of approximately 60 years of age. These figures are of serious consideration to Russian government as the overall population in the country is reducing due to what could be referred to as national alcohol addiction. Heavy drinking has been rated as one of the top most health problems; it has reached an epidemic proportion in Russia, especially among males and young adults. Alcohol consumption has been on the increase because it is relatively inexpensive, and readily available in the streets and most places throughout the day and night. This has made many people go into heavy drinking. Currently, excessive alcohol consumption is a leading source of immorality, increased crime rates, breakdown of social behavior and regulations. High rates of alcoholism in Russia have contributed

to an increase in the amount of household's disposable income set aside for alcoholic beverages. Furthermore, excessive alcohol consumption has led to cases of unemployment, family violence and stress, illnesses, as well as, work related injuries. In addition to high level drinking, Russia is also experiencing a large number of heavy smokers. Smoking is another feature that is prevalent in Russia, especially among young adults and women. This tendency has compounded the health crisis in the nation. In addition, chain smoking is endemic in Russia. Your Excellency, Russian teenagers get involved into the act of heavy smoking due to peer influence because of the desire to imitate adult smokers as a way of protest. In Russia, many people are also encouraged into the tradition of heavy smoking because of the ads on billboards, and the accessibility of cigarettes. People get involved into heavy smoking because the stuff is cheap and readily available at the street stalls. Heavy smoking among teenagers and adults has made Russia be ranked top in tobacco smoking, especially among students. According to recent studies, more than 40 million Russian adults are smokers. Worse still, the majority of the smokers are between 18 and 40 years causing a serious health implication to the most energetic population in the country. I appeal to your administration to put stringent measure to curb heavy drinking and smoking. Russian health experts have designed possible solutions that can be used to stop heavy smoking. These may significantly contribute to reducing tobacco related pandemics. The most effective measure that can reduce heavy smoking among Russians is to increase excise taxes imposed on cigarettes. This measure is particularly crucial and may save over 2 million Russian lives. Furthermore, it may also lead to an increase in total Russia's annual budget. Another possible measure to reduce heavy smoking

is putting a total ban on smoking in public places. This measure will make a considerable number of heavy smokers quit smoking. Consequently, it will lead to a reduction of deaths caused by tobacco smoking related diseases. As a concerned student, I recommend that, your office should work with doctors and encourage them to urge patients to quit the habit of smoking, or to recommend the purchase of expensive cigars that have less tar and nicotine content than Russian brands. Other measure to curb heavy smoking among Russians is to avoid cigarette advertising done in print media, as well as, smoking in theaters and work places. Sir, when young adults drink and smoke, their life is under high risk of alcohol and drugs related problems. Most young people have the tendency to drink the heaviest under the age of 18 years, hence, making young adults be at risk of heavy drinking. It has been reported by medical practitioners in Russia that young adults who are engaged in drinking have the tendency to exceed the daily limits. In order to prevent alcohol consumption among young adults, your administration should establish policies that aim at reducing alcohol consumption, as well as, reduce the rates of high-risk drinking and heavy smoking. These policies, when put in place, will ensure that the availability of alcohol is influenced. When the government implements these policies, heavy drinking and smoking among young people, below 18 years, will be reduced. The policies should also aim at altering the drinking behavior of the general population, rather than targeting populations such as the underage adults. However, these policies will have a greater impact on young adults. For instance, measures that will be addressing the legal age of attending bars, clubs and other social gatherings where alcohol and other intoxicating substances can be accessed. Heavy smoking and drinking in young adults, particularly

students, is particularly harmful. Many people who fit the diagnostic criteria for dependence in alcohol have the tendency of predisposing their personality traits and other conditional factors. This has placed them at greater risk for other alcoholic problems.

Alcoholic prevention strategies that are useful in preventing young people in taking excessive alcohol are those focusing on putting restrictions on the availability of alcohol and cigarettes to young people. Hence, it is necessary to raise the costs of alcoholic drinks through increasing taxes, putting limits at the time when alcohol can be consumed, as well as, enforcing policies that can assist in curbing and reducing problems associated with heavy smoking and drinking.

Yours sincerely...