



Ref. 008/2553

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Ambassador  
The Delegation of the European Union to Thailand  
Kian Gwan House II, 19<sup>th</sup> Floor  
140/1 Wireless Rd.  
Bangkok 10330

8 September 2010

**Subject: Exclusion of Alcohol from Thailand-EU FTA and Stop Pressuring Thai Government**

**Attention: Mr. David Lipman, Ambassador**

Attachment: Petition signed by alliance

Dear Excellency,

The Alcohol Prevention Campaign Network and StopDrink Network are civil society organisations comprising alliances of more than 264 organisations across the countries. Our missions are to raise awareness of the Thai people to reduce and refrain from drinking. We were a prime mover who encouraged a collection of more than 13 million signatories supporting the Alcoholic Beverage Control Act B.E.2551. We also aim to support law enforcement and prevention of effects from alcohol consumption and related-harms in every dimension including health, traffic injuries, economy and the society as a whole. Scientific evidences clearly demonstrate that alcohol is a global public health problem leading to more than 60 acute and chronic disease conditions. Alcohol kills more than any weapons and other drugs. It contributes to domestic violence and sexual assault. Direct and indirect economic costs from alcohol consumption in Thailand are much greater than public benefits but alcohol is shamefully treated as an ordinary commodity in world trade negotiation.

Recently, nationwide public hearings organized by the Ministry of Commerce have shown that people from all over the country concurred and strongly supported the exclusion of alcohol from International Free Trade Agreement including the Thai-EU trade negotiation framework. The Networks insist that

alcohol either in the short or long run is a hazardous product damaging particularly our younger generations. Alcohol additionally hampers the development of the country in its attempt to reduce poverty and social inequity. Consequently, alcohol should not be included in free trade agreement and should not receive any special tax preferences.

Alcohol is, by any mean, no ordinary commodity.

Free trade mechanisms mean not only tax reduction but also a free flow of goods, services and investments. Free trade philosophy promotes social prosperity through greater capacity and freedom of production, trade transaction, investment, competition and consumption. However, this philosophy should not apply to alcohol, a non-ordinary commodity. Liberalization of a whole process related to this commodity from the production until it is consumed will of course worsen alcohol-related problems in our country. Evidences from the European Union obviously show that many Member States have experienced more severe problems from higher alcohol consumption after alleviation of alcohol control policy has been forced.

Thailand has been strengthening all necessary processes to manage and control problems from alcohol consumption. The principle is to exploit comprehensive policy framework conclusive of all possible measures based on scientific evidences, with the transparency and free from conflict of interests. While all decisive alcohol policies which are non discriminatory and solely formulated for public health will have to be protected, pressure from external threats is appreciated and to be well balanced. The Networks hope that the EU will understand and will not impede Thailand's efforts to effectively address alcohol-related problems.

Lately, the general public has been widely informed through media that EU is pressuring the Thai government to include alcoholic beverages in the Thai-EU Free Trade Negotiation Framework. The alcohol industry has been closely involved and attempted to drive any possible channels to make use of the Free Trade Agreement. The Networks therefore would like to express our strong position and urge the EU to consider the following points:

1. The Networks oppose the inclusion of alcohol in the Thai-EU Free Trade Agreement. Alongside with trade benefits, EU should take morality into account. EU could take this opportunity to take the lead at the global level to alert the world of harms from alcohol and careful treatment to this product should be addressed when it comes to trade arena. Weapons and drugs kill a lot less than alcohol but they are not included in free trade. Why shouldn't alcohol which obviously kills more be excluded?

2. The Networks request the EU to stop forcing the Thai government and interfering with its policies. We request the EU to respect the consensus of Thai people after a long deliberation from the nationwide public hearing.

3. The Networks condemn the alcohol industry, related-business and Social Aspect Organizations from Europe that only hope for trade benefits from the Thai-EU Free Trade Agreement with no concern for Thai children and adolescents who are victims from direct impacts of alcohol. Thailand has encountered enormous and more than enough devastating impacts from alcohol and is still struggling with them. We do not want more problems.

Finally, we hope that our voice will be heard. Thank you for your understanding and supporting our civil movement in public policy.

Yours sincerely,



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StopDrink Network



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Alcohol Prevention Campaign Network

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