There are five compelling reasons to make alcohol an urgent public health priority in the Americas. These are:

The Americas surpass global average statistics for:
1. alcohol related deaths,
2. alcohol consumption,
3. alcohol drinking patterns,
4. alcohol use disorders and
5. alcohol is the leading risk factor for the burden of disease in the region.

The purpose of this document is to explain the need for making alcohol a top public health priority in the region and the need for national and regional action. Current evidence-based research shows that alcohol consumption and drinking patterns in the Americas are at damaging levels, with the region surpassing global averages for many alcohol related problems. Extensive research has demonstrated the effectiveness of numerous public health policies which have been evaluated in different countries and cultures.

Chapter 1 of this paper provides a snapshot of alcohol related harm and current trends in the Region.

Chapter 2 expands on evidence-based research associating alcohol with health and social problems, including deaths, diseases, injuries and high risk groups.

Chapter 3 outlines the various alcohol policies in the region and their effectiveness.

Chapter 4 lists potential barriers that could hinder successful implementation of alcohol policies in the Region.

Chapter 5 gives 10 recommendations for action with concrete, evidence based strategies and interventions at regional, national and/or local level.

Chapter 6 gives an overview of existing technical areas of work at PAHO which deal with alcohol related issues, indicating that alcohol influences nearly every aspect of the Organization’s work.