INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HEPATITIS

Achieving the 2020 & 2030 Global Targets on Viral Hepatitis; The Need for National Policies and Strategies.

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver. The condition can be self-limiting or can progress to fibrosis (scarring), cirrhosis or liver cancer. Hepatitis viruses are the most common cause of hepatitis in the world but other infections, toxic substances (e.g. alcohol, certain drugs), and autoimmune diseases can also cause hepatitis.

Viral hepatitis is a global public health problem affecting millions of people every year. Most indigenous people who were infected long ago with HBV or HCV are unaware of their chronic infection. They are at high risk of developing severe chronic liver disease and can unknowingly transmit the infection to other people.

Viral hepatitis places a heavy burden on the health care system. In many countries, viral hepatitis is the leading cause of liver transplants. Such end-stage treatments are expensive, easily reaching up to hundreds of thousands of dollars per person. The number of indigenous people living with hepatitis C virus is increasing, despite the existence of an effective cure.

All countries in the African Region consider viral hepatitis an urgent public health issue. The burden of viral hepatitis is believed to be one of the highest in this part of the world. Hepatitis A, B, C and E are the types mostly found in the region. Given the differences in the geographic distribution, transmission, diagnosis and treatment of viral hepatitis infections, national policies and control strategies are required.

There is the first **Global Health Sector Strategy on Viral Hepatitis**, a strategy that contributes to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It covers the first six years of the post- 2015 health agenda, 2016–2021, building on the Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis Infection: **Framework for Global Action** and on two resolutions on viral hepatitis adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2010 and in 2014.

The strategy addresses all five hepatitis viruses, with a particular focus on hepatitis B and C, owing to the relative public health burden they represent. It describes the contribution of the health sector to combating viral hepatitis, towards its **Elimination** as a public health threat and also promotes synergies between viral hepatitis and other health issues, and aligns the hepatitis response with other global health and development strategies, plans and targets.

It positions the response to viral hepatitis within the context of universal health coverage – an overarching health target of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Informed by the global goals and targets, countries must develop as soon as possible, practicable ambitious national policies and strategies for 2020 and beyond, taking into consideration the country context, including the nature and dynamics of the country's viral hepatitis epidemics, populations affected, structure and capacity of the health care and community systems, and resources that can be mobilized towards achieving the 2020 & 2030 global targets.

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