



WHO EURO RCM 65

Agenda Item: Matters arising from resolutions and decisions of the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board

Statement on behalf of the World Hepatitis Alliance

Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to address this 65th Regional Committee Meeting. Honourable Ministers, distinguished delegates, on behalf of the 400 million persons living with chronic viral hepatitis, we commend to you the Global Health Sector Strategy on viral hepatitis and its ambitious but achievable targets for large reductions in incidence and mortality. Viral hepatitis has for so long been denied the priority and resourcing of the other major infectious diseases – HIV, TB and malaria – that there is much catching-up to do and ambitious targets are crucial. If anything, we do not believe the proposed global targets are sufficiently ambitious, particularly around mortality.

The Global Health Sector Strategy, by virtue of being global, cannot fully take account of the differences in epidemiology and health systems in different regions. Although some European countries have a significant prevalence of viral hepatitis in the general population, the burden in Europe is more concentrated in certain populations, almost all of which are marginalised and vulnerable, than in Asia or Africa. This means that Europe needs a regional Action Plan with its own targets and interventions. The Western Pacific Region already has such an Action Plan. Europe must not lag behind simply because many of its affected populations are marginalised. On the contrary, this should be a spur to rapid action, since the Global Health Sector Strategy has a strong focus on addressing health inequities in viral hepatitis.

The World Hepatitis Alliance and its more than 200 member organisations therefore urges the Member States of the European Region to request the secretariat to begin work on a comprehensive viral hepatitis Action Plan for the European Region as soon as possible.

Thank you for your attention.