Media Statement

World Hepatitis Alliance Applauds
World Health Assembly Decision on Viral Hepatitis

Switzerland, Geneva. Friday 21st May, 2010 – The World Hepatitis Alliance has welcomed the agreement of a World Health Organization (WHO) resolution on viral hepatitis by the 63rd World Health Assembly in Geneva today.

"Today is a momentous day for the global hepatitis community" said Charles Gore, President of the World Hepatitis Alliance. "This resolution is the result of tireless campaigning by hundreds of patient groups around the world. The World Hepatitis Alliance looks forward to working with governments and the WHO to begin the urgent task of preventing new infections and providing much needed support for the 500 million people living with these diseases worldwide."

For the first time, the resolution recognises the global impact of hepatitis B and C – two diseases that kill one million people a year and which to date have not received the global attention they deserve. The World Health Assembly has established a robust framework to deliver improvements in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and awareness. The resolution clearly states the need for global coordinated action to tackle viral hepatitis backed by dedicated resources. It also provides global endorsement of World Hepatitis Day as the primary focus for national and international awareness-raising efforts.

Did You Know?

- Approximately 500 million people worldwide are infected with hepatitis B or C[1]
- This is over 10 times the number infected with HIV/AIDS[2]
- Over 50% of people infected with viral hepatitis live in countries where there is no free testing[3]
- Between them hepatitis B and C kill one million people a year[1]
- One in every three people on the planet has been exposed to either or both viruses

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World Hepatitis Alliance

The World Hepatitis Alliance provides global leadership and supports action that will halt the death toll and improve the lives of people living with chronic viral hepatitis B and C. Through better awareness, prevention, care, support and access to treatment, our ultimate goal is to work with governments to eradicate these diseases from the planet.

The World Hepatitis Alliance is a Non-Governmental Organisation representing more than 280 hepatitis B and C patient groups from around the world. The World Hepatitis Alliance is governed by a representative board elected by patient groups from seven world regions: Europe, Eastern Mediterranean, Africa, North America, Latin America, Australasia and Western Pacific. For further information visit: www.worldhepatitisalliance.org

World Hepatitis Alliance – Seeking a world without viral hepatitis B and C.

For further information or to speak to a World Hepatitis Alliance spokesperson:

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References

[1] World Health Organization. Viral hepatitis: Report by the Secretariat http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB126/B126_15-en.pdf (accessed 30 April, 2010)

[2] World Health Organization. Global summary of the AIDS epidemic. http://data.unaids.org/pub/Report/2009/JC1700_Epi_Update_2009_en.pdf (accessed 30 April, 2010)

[3] Viral Hepatitis: Global Policy. World Hepatitis Alliance in conjunction with the World Health Organization: http://www.worldhepatitisalliance.org/en/Policy/2010PolicyReport.aspx (accessed 26 April, 2010)