His Excellency, the Minister of Health and Population, Dr Adel Adawy

Dear friends and colleagues, ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

Today is an exciting day for the people of Egypt, and for people worldwide, as Egypt takes unprecedented steps against viral hepatitis. It is my pleasure to share this moment with all of you, and I thank the Ministry of Health and Population for graciously hosting this event.

I would like to begin by thanking the Minister for his leadership in treating and preventing viral hepatitis in Egypt. I recognize the crucial role that the National Committee for the Control of Viral Hepatitis has played, specifically in the development and implementation of the hepatitis C treatment programme. Their contributions have been inspirational not only in Egypt, but internationally.

I would also like to thank Egypt for taking the initiative to address the issue of viral hepatitis in such a comprehensive manner. It is a disease that affects nations around the globe, and the work that is done here will benefit people worldwide. People will look to Egypt for guidance as they fight hepatitis in their own countries.

Today is particularly exciting because hepatitis is being attacked from two sides. A new treatment programme will be started, which will provide great benefit to those who are already infected. At the same time the viral hepatitis plan of action is launched, which outlines how new infections can be prevented. I applaud the Ministry for pursuing this balance between prevention and treatment.

The plan that the Minister is announcing today is strong and well-researched. It is the result of extensive collaboration between many partners led by the Ministry of Health and Population, and including the National Committee for the Control of Viral Hepatitis, WHO, the United States

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Pasteur Institute, NAMRU-3, USAID, UNICEF, Misr El Kheir, the Red Crescent, and many others who are dedicated to reducing the burden of viral hepatitis in Egypt. It is important and commendable that other sectors, like the Ministries of Higher Education and Defense, have been involved in the development of this plan. This has created a strong base for implementation.

Together with other partners, WHO will continue to support the Government of Egypt in the shared hope to not only cure people by treatment, but also to comprehensively implement preventive measures to ensure that fewer people become infected. These measures will include surveillance, blood safety, hepatitis B birth dose vaccination and infection control. Early next year we will be working closely with Egypt to benefit from a new global injection safety initiative.

Finally, we look forward to raising public awareness of viral hepatitis. The public, together with health care providers, hold the key to prevention.

My congratulations again to the Ministry and to the people of Egypt. We applaud your efforts and your initiative, and look forward to continuing to work together on the treatment and prevention of viral hepatitis.

We look forward to the full implementation of the plan, which will be regularly monitored for progress to ensure that Egyptians can enjoy better and healthier lives.

Thank you.

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