Chairperson, thank you for this opportunity to make a statement on the agenda item under discussion. Zambia is in full support of the statement made by Togo on behalf of the Member States of the Africa Region.

The Republic of Zambia welcomes the Director General's Report on Smallpox Eradication and notes the destruction of variola virus stocks in South Africa and the United States of America.

As the Assembly is aware, the eradication of smallpox four decades ago is one of the greatest public health accomplishments of humankind and scientific endeavor, demonstrating that unity of purpose and concerted effort can achieve a better state of health for all. However, the world is now increasingly threatened by resurgence of smallpox, owing largely to advancements in synthetic biology and other molecular biology technologies.

While we note the need for research activities aimed at developing better antiviral treatments and vaccines for emerging and re-emerging pox viruses, we support a cautious approach and stricter controls in the use of live variola viruses. We applaud the efforts that have already culminated in the development of antiviral therapies and the growing global stockpile of vaccines against smallpox and similar viruses.

Zambia calls on all other Member States that may be harboring such stocks to similarly come to the fore and ensure that these materials are destroyed.

Finally, Chairperson, the Republic of Zambia welcomes the WHO's recommendations concerning the synthesis and use of variola virus DNA and affirms commitment to incorporate these into the national biosafety legislation and guidelines.

I thank you.