STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA ON AGENDA ITEM 11: EPILEPSY

Zambia is honoured to take the floor and wishes to thank the Secretariat for their work in making available the report on epilepsy. There is indeed a need for coordinated multisectoral and multidisciplinary collaborative actions at country level to address its health, social and public knowledge implications.

Chairperson, Epilepsy is of particular importance to Zambia because 80% of the 50 million people affected live in low and middle income countries such as ours, and, the risk of premature death in people with epilepsy is up to three times higher than in the general population. We note the social impact of epilepsy as the disease is shrouded in stigmatization which usually leads to human rights violations and social exclusion. Thus, we are concerned that a huge treatment gap exists estimated at 75% in low-income countries and this is mostly attributed to the cost of anti-seizure medicines being several times higher in low-income countries than in high income countries.

We acknowledge that secretariat has a programme on reducing the Epilepsy treatment gap and that efforts are being made to ensure that non-specialist primary health care providers are able to diagnose, treat and follow-up people with epilepsy. Our appeal is that efforts be extended to coordinate a multi-stakeholder review of the prices of anti-seizure medicines and diagnostic and therapeutic tools and technology in order to ensure their accessibility in public health and primary health facilities in low-income countries that have the highest burden.

Zambia has taken note of the report and recognizes that member states are encouraged to integrate epilepsy into their action plans on non-communicable diseases and mental health. We request Secretariat for support in this matter and we look forward to a comprehensive report on progress being made in implementation in future deliberations by the Executive Board.

I thank you