STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA ON AGENDA ITEM 16.1: POLIO ERADICATION

Thank you Chairperson,

Zambia commends the WHO and all stakeholders on the strides made thus far towards the eradication of polio; and the efforts made by Member States in our Region towards the attainment of a great milestone of possible certification of the Africa Region as wild poliovirus free.

Chairperson, the continued outbreaks of polio due to circulating vaccine derived poliovirus type 2, twenty-one years after the eradication of the wild type is however unacceptable and a reminder of the inequalities that continue to exist in our world. It is a daunting task to convince our people that the very cause of the disease is the best choice we have at prevention; and puts a great dent on the celebrations of the milestones alluded to earlier; as well as impact negatively, the fight against the ever increasing vaccine hesitancy.

In this regard, Zambia applauds the development of the novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2) which has so far demonstrated a potential lower risk of mutating and causing paralysis.

While we welcome the Global Polio Eradication Initiative Strategy for Control of cVDPV2, 2020-2021, our earnest appeal to the Secretariat is to heighten its integration within the broader health systems to enable leverage on the available infrastructure, assets, systems and expertise and strengthen not only the expanded program on immunization but primary health care systems in general.

We believe lessons have been learnt from the switch, and that in future adequate alternatives would be put in place, particularly for countries like ours.

I thank you