Mr Chairman

Ladies and Gentlemen. My intervention relates to Agenda Items 14.2. and 14.4.

The prevalence of Hepatitis B infection in Vanuatu is estimated at 15-25%, representing between 45,000 and 75,000 people. Hepatitis C prevalence is comparative low at less than 1%. Cirrhosis and liver cancer are responsible for 94% of deaths associated with hepatitis infections. Vanuatu is ranked seventh with regards to the incidence rate of liver cancer in the Western Pacific Region (WPR). However, we know that the majority of cases of liver cancer can be prevented through effective prevention and treatment of hepatitis B and C.
Given this disease burden – and the opportunity for prevention and treatment - the Ministry of Health with the support from WHO and partners has initiated the development of a National Action Plan for Viral Hepatitis. This was framed by the key priorities of the Regional action plan for viral hepatitis in the Western Pacific 2016–2020: a priority action plan for awareness, surveillance, prevention and treatment of viral hepatitis in the Western Pacific.

Following the global vision of “A world where viral hepatitis transmission is halted and everyone living with viral hepatitis has access to safe, affordable and effective prevention, care and treatment services”, the Vanuatu Ministry of Health is requesting for WHO to provide continued assistance in (a) supporting the development and implementation of the National Action Plan for Viral Hepatitis, (b) supporting resource mobilization to scale-up prevention, diagnosis and treatment capacity to support Vanuatu to prevent, test and treat towards elimination of viral hepatitis as a public health threat.

Mr Chairman
Ladies and Gentlemen, my intervention relates to Agenda Item 14.4 on the Roadmap for Neglected Tropical Diseases.

Regarding Neglected Tropical Diseases, since the launch of our program in 2013 Vanuatu has achieved drastic reduction of confirmed cases of Yaws. Over this 9 year period, there was an 88% drop in confirmed Yaws cases from 17.8 in 2013 to just 2.06% in 2021. Currently only 2 of 6 provinces are still reporting active Yaws cases, the other 4 provinces are
undertaking active monitoring yet have continued to report zero cases since 2019.

The Government of Vanuatu has strengthening our commitment towards Yaws elimination. The Ministry of Health continue to working very closely with WHO to ensure Yaws elimination is achievable as per the global target.

In terms of Trachoma, Vanuatu looks forward to receiving feedback on our application for WHO certification of nationwide Trachoma Free status. We appreciate the support provide by WHO in these processes.

We thank the WHO Secretariat, and urge continued support to protect the population of Vanuatu from the scourge of diseases such as viral hepatitis and neglected tropical diseases, and their devastating consequences.

Chair

I thank you.

25 May 2022, Geneva, Switzerland.