

**Statement by Medicus Mundi International
to the 133rd session of the WHO Executive Board
on agenda item 6.5. Improving the health of patients with viral hepatitis”
Delivered by Hani Serag**

PHM hopes that discussing this item will reinforce the implementation of the previous WHA resolution WHA63.18 and mandate the secretariat to provide a comprehensive report linking the progress to each of the resolution items and giving illustrative examples from countries with high burden of the disease.

The resolution WHA63.18 incorporated a comprehensive list of strategies to guide an effective response to combat the viral hepatitis including: health system strengthening and the use of the flexibilities contained in the TRIPs agreement.

The report of the WHO secretariat A65/25 and the framework of global action failed to report on the implementation of these strategies. Despite the reference to the importance on integrated response and the need to strengthen the national health system, they did not report on any explicit measures in this regard. They have also ignored any reference to the use of TRIPs flexibilities to enhance the access to antiviral treatment.

Viral hepatitis-C is curable with a standard treatment of pegylated interferon and ribavirin with a success rate over 50%; hence, the access to treatment is vital to combat the disease.

The explanatory note provided by Egypt estimated the treated cases by 250,000 which accounts for a negligible percentage of those in need and eligible.

Despite the success in reducing the price of anti-viral treatment, the coverage remains low. The reduction was reached through an agreement with Roche to produce locally-packed form of an original brand of interferon. This was a political choice made over other possibilities; e.g. the parallel importation of generics or local manufacture.

PHM urges Egypt to use the TRIPs flexibilities and consider all alternatives to provide free access to anti-viral treatments. This needs WHO support to alleviate expected pressure from pharmaceutical companies and other international powers. Before that, it needs political will from the Egyptian regime.