New data shows relentless rise in hepatitis deaths:

World leaders meet in Scotland to discuss urgent response and move towards elimination of 7th biggest global killer

- Governments from around the world convene to agree on a road map towards elimination of viral hepatitis
- Worldwide, viral hepatitis kills more than 1.4 million people a year, 4000 people a day, and more than 400 million people are chronically infected with hepatitis B or C

London, 2nd September 2015: Today marks the start of the first-ever World Hepatitis Summit hosted in Glasgow, Scotland, at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC). The World Hepatitis Summit is a joint World Health Organization (WHO) and World Hepatitis Alliance (WhA) event hosted by the Scottish Government and supported by Glasgow Caledonian University and Health Protection Scotland. It brings together policy makers, patients, civil society, physicians and representatives from each of the World Hepatitis Alliance’s 200 patient group organisations.

This three-day meeting comes in response to last year’s World Health Assembly Resolution calling for concerted action to reverse the ever-rising death toll from viral hepatitis. New Global Burden of Disease data being presented at the Summit today shows, for the first time, the five year incremental increase in global deaths from viral hepatitis. It confirms the relentless year on year rise in the number of deaths. Viral hepatitis now kills more people than HIV/AIDS, or TB, or malaria and has become the 7th biggest annual killer globally.

Hosted by the Scottish Government - widely recognised as having ‘a world leading approach’ towards the testing and treatment of hepatitis C – the three-day Summit will discuss the draft WHO Global Health Sector Strategy on Viral Hepatitis with its targets for 2030 that importantly pave the way for the elimination of viral hepatitis as a problem of public health concern and on the national action required to reach those targets. Specifically the draft Strategy aims to achieve by 2030:

- 90% reduction in new cases of chronic hepatitis B and C
- 65% reduction in hepatitis B and C deaths
- 80% of treatment eligible persons with chronic hepatitis B and C infections treated

Such ambitious targets will require governments to put in place national hepatitis strategies and the Summit will focus on providing countries with the necessary technical expertise with WHO-supported workshops on key elements of any strategy, including surveillance, effective prevention, access to treatment, scaling up service delivery and funding the response.
Commenting from the Summit Charles Gore, President of the World Hepatitis Alliance said “We already have almost all the tools needed to eliminate viral hepatitis. What we don’t have yet is the commitment, the know-how and the funding to use these tools. This Summit is about empowering countries to take the practical steps needed at a national level; it is about how to take a vision and make it happen.”

Because viral hepatitis has been neglected for so long, much needs to be done rapidly to make up for lost time. In that context, the Summit, intended as an annual event, will focus on the public health approach to viral hepatitis and become the central forum for countries to share their experience and best practice in order to drive rapid advances in national responses.

Dr. Gottfried Hirnschall, Director of the WHO Department of HIV/AIDS and Global Hepatitis Programme said “We have seen from the global response to HIV what can be achieved when governments, civil society, international organizations and the private sector work together to provide prevention and treatment services to those who need them. The time is now for everyone to come together and work toward eliminating viral hepatitis as a major public health threat.”

Notes to Editors

About Viral Hepatitis
Viral hepatitis is inflammation of the liver caused by a virus. There are five different hepatitis viruses, hepatitis A, B, C, D and E.

All of these viruses cause short term, or acute infection. However the hepatitis B, C viruses can also cause long-term infection, called chronic hepatitis, which can lead to life-threatening complications such as cirrhosis (liver scarring), liver failure, and liver cancer. Viral hepatitis kills more than 1.4 million people every year.

About the draft Global Health Sector Strategy on Viral Hepatitis, 2016-2021
The strategy builds on the current WHO Framework for Action on Viral Hepatitis (2012) and the 2010 and 2014 World Health Assembly resolutions on viral hepatitis. It is closely aligned with the post-2015 health and development agenda and targets, the drive towards universal health coverage, as well as with related global health strategies and plans, including those for HIV, sexually transmitted infections, blood safety and non-communicable diseases.

The draft strategy sets out an ambitious set of targets to greatly reduce new infections and deaths from viral hepatitis by 2030 and to provide a corresponding coverage of prevention and treatment interventions to make this happen.

About The World Hepatitis Summit 2015
The World Hepatitis Summit provides a unique platform to strengthen the hepatitis community voice, assist countries in developing national hepatitis action plans and to raise the global profile of viral hepatitis. As a platform to improve the creation and implementation of action plans through sharing of best practice, the World Hepatitis Summit will directly support the WHA67.R7 resolution.
About The World Hepatitis Alliance
The World Hepatitis Alliance is an international umbrella organisation seeking a world without viral hepatitis. Working on policy change, capacity building, access and awareness.

About The World Health Organization
WHO is the specialised agency for health within the United Nations system. It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends.

Summit infographic
A large, high resolution version of this infographic accompanies this press release.
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