**The Republic of Zambia**

**STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA ON AGENDA ITEM 10: CERTIFICATION OF WILD POLIOVIRUS ERADICATION IN THE AFRICAN REGION AND SUSTAINING THE GAINS, POST-CERTIFICATION**

Chairperson,

The Republic of Zambia joins the rest of the world in congratulating the Africa Region, the Regional Director and her team, and all stakeholders, on this momentous occasion. It is gratifying to note that a lot can indeed be achieved if we unite as a Region towards a common goal.

As we commemorate the attainment of this great milestone, we applaud the Secretariat for not only focusing on what has been achieved today, but also for emphasizing the need to sustain the gains, post certification, and ensure the Region sustains its newly acquired status.

Chairperson, Zambia wishes to implore the need for a cautious approach to the reduction in Global Polio Eradication Initiative funding and ramp-down of polio personnel. As alluded to in the report, various challenges that perpetuate the threat to possible importation of the wild poliovirus, still remain. This is particularly highlighted by the number of circulating vaccine derived poliovirus type 2 outbreaks that we have witnessed in the Region including Zambai in recent years; coupled by the effects of the novel coronavirus pandemic on not only the polio eradication programme, but the entire health sector.

As a country, we attest to having greatly benefited from the resources made available to us in the fight against polio generally, and specifically while responding to the cVDPV2 outbreaks that occurred towards the end of 2019. The initial response ended in April, 2020, followed by a supplemental immunization activity in June this year.

In addition, we have been able to leverage on the available infrastructure, assets, systems and expertise from the fight against polio, particularly cutting edge innovations in surveillance and data management, in our country response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This could not have been possible without this key GPEI resource.

We therefore call upon Secretariat and all stakeholders, to continue supporting the post certification era, which include making available all relevant tools necessary for the eradication of polio in its entirety, and continued creation of robust, resilient and sustainable health systems..

I thank you