

UN Group of Friends to Eliminate Hepatitis

Second Annual Meeting | Sep 22, 2023 | **Executive Summary**

The United Nations Group of Friends to Eliminate Hepatitis re-affirmed global solidarity for hepatitis elimination at their second annual meeting on September 22, 2023 during the 78th UN General Assembly in New York.



Formed under the leadership of Egypt's permanent mission to the UN, the Group of Friends aims to increase health diplomacy, as well as national and international commitments, to achieve WHO targets of hepatitis elimination by 2030. This year's meeting featured two programs. The first program was "Strengthening Political Commitment and Global Solidarity for Hepatitis Elimination: Hepatitis service integration via UHC." The second program was "Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of Hepatitis B virus: Achievement of the UN SDG." CGHE Director John Ward thanked countries for their attendance as evidence that their "willingness to come forward as a show of solidarity for hepatitis elimination is a testament of what we can do together more effectively than what we can do separately."

Diplomats and health ministers from 15 member states presented, and representatives from 14 international organizations participated. Dr. Harvey Alter, a recipient of the 2020 Nobel Prize in Medicine for his work leading to the discovery of the hepatitis C virus, gave an opening statement.

"I'm impressed you would travel so far and have such enthusiasm to join this Group of Friends... How often can you participate in a project that can eradicate a chronic, fatal disease? This is our goal." –Dr. Harvey Alter



Ambassador Ahmed Elshandawily, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the UN, welcomed participants and urged international commitment to eliminate hepatitis: "We have an opportunity to mobilize support through this group...to exchange information, best practices, and lessons learned on the prevention of viral hepatitis and increasing testing and treatment."

Portugal and Chile joined Egypt in the group's Leadership Circle. Ambassador Jorge Aranda of Portugal expressed his country's strong support for the Group of Friends, and Andrea Peña from Chile's Ministry of Health shared in this message.

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The first session was focused on international commitment and pursuing hepatitis elimination through universal health coverage. Pakistan's Ambassador to the US, Masood Khan, reaffirmed his country's commitment to elimination by 2030. Representatives from WHO, Africa CDC and PEPFAR spoke in the morning's program. Ministers of health and high-level health policymakers from Ghana, Korea, Ukraine, Somalia, Malaysia and Mexico also spoke on the situation of hepatitis in their countries and their commitment to progress.

In the second program, speakers from the World Hepatitis Alliance, UNICEF and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance were joined by health officials from Ethiopia, Uganda, Georgia, Malawi, and the United States to discuss the urgent need for elimination of mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B. The program concluded with a panel discussion including officials from WHO, WHA, Harvard's Program in Global Primary Care and Social Change, HepB Foundation, and the Clinton Health Access Initiative.



Portugal's Ambassador Jorge Aranda expressed his country's enthusiasm for joining the leadership circle:

"It is really an honor but also a joy for us to join this leadership circle... our participation in this leadership circle also shows our solidarity and also our commitment to eliminating hepatitis. This commitment fits well with the global theme of this year's General Assembly, which is rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity." – Ambassador Jorge Aranda, Portugal

Andrea Peña from Chile's Ministry of Health explained that there is much work yet to do, and that the group must not flag in its efforts to meet elimination goals.

"We urge everyone to embrace tenacity...and continue working for those who need our attention the most." – Dr. Andrea Peña, Chile



CGHE serves as the secretariat to the UN Group of Friends to Eliminate Hepatitis.

The activities of the Group of Friends to Eliminate Hepatitis will be determined by the participating Member States. The Coalition is supporting communications to encourage participation by all Member States to increase awareness regarding the mission and goals of the group. For more information on the UN Group of Friends to Eliminate Hepatitis, contact globalhep@taskforce.org.