Statement at the 24th meeting of the WHO Expert Committee on the selection and use of essential medicines by Neurology organisations on the 24th of April 2023.

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Neurology organisations:

- Multiple Sclerosis International Federation
- WHO Collaborating Centre Bologna
- Cochrane Multiple Sclerosis and Rare Diseases of the CNS Review Group
- Alzheimer's Disease International
- International League Against Epilepsy
- International Bureau for Epilepsy
- African Academy of Neurology
- American Academy of Neurology
- European Academy of Neurology
- World Federation of Neurology

Dear Expert Committee on the selection and use of essential medicines, Dear Delegates,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Multiple Sclerosis International Federation, WHO Collaborating Centre Bologna, Cochrane Multiple Sclerosis and Rare Diseases of the CNS Review Group, Alzheimer’s Disease International, International League Against Epilepsy, International Bureau for Epilepsy, the African Academy of Neurology, the American Academy of Neurology, the European Academy of Neurology and the World Federation of Neurology.

The increasing prevalence of neurological conditions is a global health crisis that requires urgent attention. Neurological conditions are the leading cause of disability and the second leading cause of death worldwide. 1 in 3 people will suffer from a neurological disorder at some point in their lives. Despite there being effective treatments for some neurological conditions - which can significantly reduce the burden of disability experienced by people living with them - the reality is that a large proportion of people are not able to access the treatments they need.

As global and regional neurological organisations, we have been, and will continue to, work to change this. Listing medicines on the EML for neurological conditions - including multiple sclerosis, epilepsy and Alzheimer’s disease – will underpin and drive forwards our efforts.

Brain Health is a WHO priority. In May 2022, during the 75th World Health Assembly, Member States unanimously approved the ten-year Intersectoral Global Action Plan on epilepsy and other neurological disorders

As stated in this global plan, essential medicines play a vital role in both the prevention and treatment of neurological disorders. It is critical that the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines is updated to reflect this. This will support countries – particularly low and middle-income countries where 70% of the global burden of neurological disorders falls – to select and prioritise essential medicines required to manage neurological disorders. And it will provide the catalyst needed for governments to promote activities that can improve access to affordable, safe, effective and quality medicines.

We believe that everyone with a neurological condition, including multiple sclerosis, epilepsy and Alzheimer’s disease, has a right to care and treatment. A decision to list these medicines will initiate a paradigm shift in access to treatment for neurological disorders, enabling us to work towards improving the lives of millions of people across the world.

Thank you.