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**MEMORANDUM OF THE HONOURABLE COMMISSIONER FOR HEALTH, TARABA STATE ON THE  
TARABA STATE/ROCHE HEPATITIS TREATMENT ACCESS PROJECT**

**1. Purpose**

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform Council of the collaboration of the State and Roche Limited aimed at increasing access to viral hepatitis diagnosis and treatment services in the State, and to seek Council's approval for other States of the federation and the FCT to take similar measures to make hepatitis preventive, diagnostic and treatment services accessible to their citizens.

**2. Background**

Viral hepatitis, particularly Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C have since been recognized as diseases of serious public health importance, causing significant morbidity and mortality. The prevalence of these diseases in Nigeria is about 11% for hepatitis B and 2% for hepatitis C. However local studies in Taraba State indicates that the prevalence of hepatitis could be much higher. Over the past years, there has been significant awareness about viral hepatitis with screening campaigns conducted by various Non-governmental organisations. This has led to a demand for treatment services which unfortunately was not easily available in the State.

**3. Issues and Justification**

Treatment of viral hepatitis is very expensive and often not available in the State. Many unscrupulous individuals have taken advantage of this situation to exploit citizens without providing any benefits whatsoever. This is why the State government has resolved to provide access to prevention and treatment services for free. Roche Limited, a major pharmaceutical company and a leader in the provision of diagnostics and treatment products for viral hepatitis has offered to partner the State on this project. This collaborative proposal was submitted to government in 2011 but a MOU and project agreement was only signed in 2016.

The Hepatitis Treatment Access Programme agreement with Roche Products is for a period of five-years. It is estimated that 50,000 individuals would be screened for the viral hepatitis out of which an estimated 2,450 eligible positive patients will benefit from free treatment during the course of the project. An estimated 44,500 of persons screened will be negative for hepatitis B and will receive vaccination with the hepatitis B vaccine.

Government has committed to spend 1.326 billion naira over the five years to cover for 50% of the cost of the drugs, 30% of the cost of the viral load testing required, cost of other supportive laboratory test during the course of the treatment and the cost of the screening test and hepatitis B vaccines. Roche will cover for 50% of the cost of the drugs and 70% of the cost of viral load testing amounting to nine hundred and ninety-four million naira (N994,000,000). In addition, Roche further supported with training of health care workers, awareness creation, and has made available to the State a State-of-of-the-art

supportive diagnostic equipment. Government has since approved and released the sum of 100 million for the first implementation to kick start the project.

The Hepatitis Treatment Access project offers services to all citizens of the State. However the services for now are offered in only one location in each of the 3 senatorial zones in the State. The services will gradually be scaled-up to other health facilities to increase access.

Implementation began in earnest in December 2017 following a flag-off of the project by the Executive Governor of Taraba State, Arch. Darius Dickson Ishaku. Treatment for now is offered for only Hepatitis B using Pegylated Interferon (Pegasys®). The Ministry is aware that treatment guidelines have now changed since the Project document was submitted and already discussions are ongoing with Roche to modify the agreement in the second year of implementation to include treatment for Hepatitis C (and also for Hepatitis B) using the new antiviral drugs now available.

### **Prayers**

**Council is hereby invited to note** the modest effort of the Taraba State government to address the high burden of viral hepatitis in the State in collaboration with Roche Limited.

Council is further invited to approve that other States of the federation and the FCT take similar measures to make hepatitis preventive, diagnostic and treatment services accessible to their citizens.

**Honourable Commissioner for Health, Taraba State**

**JUNE, 2018**