Members of the 22nd Expert Committee on the Selection and Use of Essential Medicines
Department of Essential Medicines and Health Products
World Health Organization (WHO)

By email to: emlsecretariat@who.int

22 November 2018

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express the support of the UK Government for the inclusion of co-packaged oral rehydration salts (ORS) solution and zinc for the treatment of diarrhoea to the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines for Children (EMLc). This inclusion would provide a welcome link between the long-standing global recommendation and frontline practice in the treatment of childhood diarrhoea.

The co-packaging of ORS and zinc has the potential to reduce neonatal and child mortality and morbidity, and increase the quality of health care provided, particularly in low and middle-income countries. Both products are already listed separately in the EMLc, and administration of both has been recommended by WHO and UNICEF since 2004. Both products are widely available globally and are safe, cost-effective, and inexpensive to manufacture. There are an increasing number of co-packaged products available on the market, and at least four countries have already included co-packaged ORS and zinc on their national EMLs.

Through DFID’s support to building stronger health systems in low and middle-income countries we can help expand access to co-packaged ORS and zinc as part of a cost-effective package of essential health services.

We hope that the committee will take into account the additional lives that could be saved or improved with expanded access to co-packaged ORS, and zinc and include co-packaged ORS and zinc on the EMLc for the management of childhood diarrhoea.

Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP
Secretary of State