

Statement of I.R. Iran on “Polio eradication”

Madam Chairperson, ladies & gentlemen,

We appreciate the secretariat for organizing the valuable document A76/13, which correctly addresses the important areas of the polio eradication activities included in goals 1 and 2, preparing for the post certification world, financing and global commitment to poliomyelitis eradication.

During the past couple of months, cases due to wild Poliovirus have diminished in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and polio eradication has never seemed more achievable than now.

The I.R.Iran has taken a variety of actions in line with the Polio Eradication Strategy 2022–2026 e.g full integration of the polio program in the national PHC system, and enhancement of engagement of all political and community leaders to ensure synchronized activities for polio eradication.

Polio vaccination coverage in Iran is around 99 % at national level and more than 95 % in all districts.

One of the serious challenges to the program is the recent conflicts in a neighboring country, which concluded to a significant increase of refugees and migrants movements into Iran. Many health indicators would be affected, if the influx of such a large population happens in a disorganized way. As a response strategy, recently we conducted an integrated national supplementary immunization campaign using the location/population approach with the support of WHO, UNICEF and UNHCR to address this issue, which needs to be continued

Iran has a domestic oral polio vaccine producer, yet the country has suffered from unilateral coercive measures in recent years and has faced challenges for access to vaccine related materials including Vaccine Vial Monitor (VVM).

We recommend WHO to support the program in the following ways:

1. To accelerate nOPV2 prequalification in order to minimize the risk of cVDPV2 resurgence
2. To address social determinants of health in line with the related SDG goals in vulnerable countries in coordination with other international and humanitarian organizations
3. To develop a comprehensive plan to address vaccine refusal. In this regard, IAG can help to address this challenge, especially two polio endemic countries.
4. To strengthen WHO support for Iran's National Polio Laboratory given the importance of the reference laboratory in maintaining surveillance and early detection capacities robust as we get closer to eradication era.

Thank you Madam Chairperson.