Mr. President,

Afghanistan welcomes the Report of the Director-General and commends his hard work.

The Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, appreciates the primary and fundamental steps of WHO which facilitates the implementation of activities on the ground, such as Global Polio Eradication Initiative, health emergencies, epidemic control, and outbreak response as part of humanitarian assistance all over Afghanistan. We would like to build upon this vital partnership to address challenges related to the aforementioned areas timely, as we are one of the countries with high burden of those cases.

Afghanistan’s health sector has been making significant progress over the last decades, with a considerable decline in infant, child and maternal mortality.

Afghanistan has transformed from a conflict-torn health system both in infrastructure and service delivery terms to a relatively functional health system through an innovative approach by initiating the Basic Package of Health Services and Essential Package of Health Services. Now more than three thousand health facilities are operational, which ensures access to almost 93% of the Afghan population with two hours of walking distance and we are grateful to WHO’s significant contribution in these achievements.

Mr, Chair,

Afghanistan’s polio program has proven itself as strong program with ability to stop polio transmission in the past. However, lack of consistent access to immunization has led to re-establishment of polio-virus transmission, which mostly remained geographically restricted to the South and East Regions in 2019.

Polio Eradication is the priority of the Government of Afghanistan. In 2019, only Twenty-four polio cases were reported. It is because of having no access to immunization in conflict zones. House to house Vaccination are still not allowed in many important conflict areas including the south region with active polio transmission and only health facilities vaccination was allowed only from October to December 2019.

Current restrictions on polio vaccination is the main concern of the GoIRA. I call on all partners, to enhance strategic dialogue efforts to lift the ban on house to house vaccination to overcome
the current created challenges and improve access to immunization in those restricted areas of
the country.

The GoIRA assures that the political transition process would not affect the polio eradication
efforts, and this is an important issue for us and should be guaranteed in the peace process and
its negotiations.

Afghanistan will continue to coordinate with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on joint polio
eradication program to maintain synchronized efforts to stop polio transmission in the bordering
areas of the two countries and call on Islamic Republic of Pakistan to ensure the same level of
collaboration.

Mr. Chair,

Despite the complex situation in Afghanistan, the GoIRA is committed to work for strengthening
the high quality and accessible healthcare for all Afghans and continues its efforts towards polio
eradication and will continue to utilize the scenario-based approach under the 2020 National
Emergency Action Plan and the GoIRA has a “Zero Tolerance Policy” for any performance gaps
in implementation of polio vaccines.

The polio emergency operation centre is putting together a plan for integrated services to
improve community acceptance for polio vaccination. The plan will soon be shared with the
Global Polio Eradication Initiative and other partners for support.

I thank you, Mr President.