



European Union
Statement

WHO

73th Session of the World Health Assembly
(9-14 November 2020)

Item 13.5. Poliomyelitis. Polio eradication.
Polio transition planning and polio post-certification

Geneva, 10 November 2020

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EU Statement

Mr Chair,

Director General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Commenting on the DG's polio eradication and transition reports, I speak on behalf the EU and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

First of all, the EU and its Member States hereby confirm our firm commitment to reach the goal of a polio-free world and to keep the world polio-free. We are committed to finishing the job.

* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

It won't be an easy task, for sure, but it should be a realistic and feasible one, with as little as **820** reported polio cases in the last 12 months; 600 of them were due to circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus **2**, 20 to circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus **1**, and just the rest of about **200 cases** was caused by wild polio virus **1** in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Secondly, we applaud the WHO African region for finally having received their wild polio-free certification on August 25th, after 4 years without a case of wild poliovirus, thus reaching a truly historic milestone.

The polio program in Africa also has significantly contributed to Africa's public health and outbreak response systems, including their COVID-19 response capacity; it has far-reaching health benefits to local communities.

In this context it is crucial that we focus on the integration of the polio assets into the national health programs and have polio vaccines integrated into the regular immunization programs.

The main challenges ahead now are the restart and continuation of immunization programs and health systems strengthening in the remaining polio countries.

We all must remain vigilant against all forms of polio. The incredible progress made so far can only be permanently safeguarded if every polio strain is eradicated everywhere and if we sustainably succeed in maintaining a high immunization level within the respective population.

Currently, we have to address the challenge that the suspension of more than 60 planned polio campaigns in almost 40 countries threatens to throw us back by years or even decades in our global polio eradication efforts.

In continuing this historic endeavour, we must pay the highest attention to the health and safety of polio workers in particular, as well as that of the children and families in the countries concerned, including their optimal protection against a COVID-19 infection.

We therefore encourage the secretariat to reinforce its transition activities by implementing the **polio transition corporate workplan** with a focus on enhancing the role of regional offices and strengthening country capacities, as this work stream is vital to ensure the integration of polio assets.

As GPEI is facing a significant shortfall in its budget 2021, we call upon all Member States to join our efforts to close this financing gap, while also looking for efficiency gains.

Finally, we encourage WHO and GPEI to jointly revise the **Polio Eradication Endgame Strategy 2019-2023**, the **Strategic Action Plan on Polio Transition 2018–2023** and the related budgets together with donors and partner countries, and to resume all interrupted polio vaccinations programs as soon as possible.

Together we will make it.

Thank you.

(494 words)