

World Health Assembly 78

Statement by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

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Agenda item 17.5 Poliomyelitis

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the world's first polio vaccine, and monumental progress against polio has since been made by the global community.

Cases of wild polio have dropped by 99% since the Global Polio Eradication Initiative was established. However, conflicts, fragility and humanitarian crises have given polio the space to fight back. Gavi is concerned by the upsurge in polio cases in 2024, and its re-emergence in places that had long been polio-free.

As a member of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, Gavi firmly believes committing to polio eradication is an essential investment in health systems and global health security. Eradicating polio could not only save lives but an estimated US\$ 33.1 billion in direct costs this century, compared to the cost of controlling the virus and responding continuously to outbreaks. The cost of failing to reach eradication could be a global resurgence of polio and its devastating consequences.

To achieve and maintain a world free of poliovirus, we must prioritise scaling up routine immunisation and reaching the estimated 21 million under- and unvaccinated children worldwide.

Gavi will continue to support these efforts and calls upon Member States to:

- Ensure an integrated approach to reaching zero-dose children with vaccination and primary health care interventions, especially in humanitarian settings and complex emergencies.
- Promote and accelerate the transition of essential polio and broader immunisation functions, by integrating polio-funded assets into existing national health systems.