Austria thanks the Secretariat for elaborating the two reports on polio eradication and polio transition planning. As we all know, polio programmes have proven to be a highly effective tool not only for carrying out polio vaccination campaigns, but also as a line of first defence in order to mitigate and contain Covid-19 outbreaks in numerous countries. Furthermore, polio eradication programmes will also be of critical importance in the future roll-out of COVID-19 immunization programmes.

Like in other areas, however, Covid-19 has led to an interruption or suspension of polio programmes that now need to be relaunched and continued in order to avoid a severe back-slide.

With population immunity against polio and other communicable diseases like measles dropping due to COVID-19, the world faces a potential storm of vaccine-preventable disease out-breaks.
• In addition, we see an exponential increase in cVDPV2 cases from 2 in 2016 to about 660 in 2020. The recently launched novel Oral Polio Vaccine (nOPV2) will be a significant step forward to stop vaccine derived polio virus type 2 outbreaks.

• In order to implement the GPEI Response Strategy to the cVDPV2 outbreaks, urgent funding is required to stop these outbreaks.

• It is of high importance to finance the polio eradication costs mentioned in The Emergency Call for Action launched by the DG in November 2020, asking for additional funds for polio eradication of USD 400m for 2020/2021.

• Thank you.