

**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION**  
Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean  
**ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTE**  
Bureau régional de la Méditerranée orientale



مِنْظَرَةُ الصَّحَّةِ الْعَالَمِيَّةِ  
المكتب الإقليمي شرق المتوسط

3-polio-PAK

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

**Message from**

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**REGIONAL DIRECTOR**

**WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

**to the**

**THIRD COORDINATION MEETING ON PREVENTION OF CROSS-BORDER  
TRANSMISSION OF WILD POLIOVIRUS BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN,  
THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, AND PAKISTAN**

**Islamabad, Pakistan, 9–10 August 1999**

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this coordination meeting on prevention of cross-border transmission of wild poliovirus between Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the Government of Pakistan for hosting the meeting and for the excellent arrangements made for the purpose.

I am very pleased to note the participation of the national staff involved in poliomyelitis eradication and representatives of our partners in the global poliomyelitis

eradication initiative, namely UNICEF, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, USA and Rotary International.

Dear Colleagues,

Allow me to emphasize that border areas may represent the last reservoirs of wild poliovirus, endangering poliomyelitis eradication efforts in the Region and worldwide. The WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean Region, during its session in October 1997, discussed the subject at length and adopted a resolution related to the need to strengthen efforts to prevent cross-border transmission of wild poliovirus to and from countries of the Region. The Regional Office is working closely with other WHO Regional Offices to overcome the problems and the potential risk of cross-border transmission.

It is gratifying to note that the joint activities to prevent cross-border transmission of wild poliovirus introduced by the countries present at this meeting are playing an excellent role in reaching the eradication target. The Islamic Republic of Iran is very close to stopping wild poliovirus circulation nationally and circulation of the virus in Pakistan has been much reduced. At the same time, it is difficult to assess the impact of the border area activities on poliomyelitis in Afghanistan in the light of the increased AFP/polio case reporting by the rapidly improving the national surveillance system.

Dear Colleagues,

The overall objective of this meeting is to appraise achievements critically and to identify problems faced at all levels in implementing this important activity, and to adjust future polio eradication activities, including surveillance, accordingly. Please keep in mind that today only just over 500 days are left to achieve the global target of zero polio case reporting by the end of 2000 and thus there is no room for complacency. We also have to remember that any problem will not just reflect on the country in question but is the problem of all countries and all should try to find joint solutions. Wild poliovirus will not restrict itself to Afghanistan or Pakistan. It does not respect borders between countries, regions and continents.

Dear Colleagues,

This is the third meeting to coordinate eradication efforts in the geographical areas bordering your countries. I am pleased to note that in the previous two meetings you made very practical recommendations and that these were successfully implemented. I am confident that the third meeting will also contribute to the poliomyelitis eradication efforts in your countries, as well as regionally and globally, and will bring us that much closer to achieving polio-free status in the very near future.

In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity to thank once again the Government of Pakistan for hosting this important meeting and to thank every individual participant for the efforts made. I also wish to thank the international agencies, particularly Rotary International and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for their continued support and contribution to the national and regional eradication initiatives.

I wish you all success in your deliberations and a pleasant stay in Islamabad.