



Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN Geneva

WHO EXECUTIVE BOARD 148th Session (virtual) (18-26 January, 2021)

Agenda item 15 : Poliomyelitis (Eradication & Transition)

Mr. Chairman,

Polio eradication remains a top priority for the Government of Pakistan. Under the umbrella of the national network of Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs), measures are in place to provide fullest support to the programme in accessing each and every household through strong coordination mechanisms at all levels.

Learning from challenges in 2019, we started our battle afresh through a transformed programme in 2020 promoting sense of collective responsibility across all divides.

COVID-19 pause did affect our momentum, but we took a consensus decision to repurpose the polio programme strengths and capacities in surveillance, risk assessment and communication in support of the COVID response. These contributions have indeed been instrumental in our success thus far.

However, we did not lose focus on our goal. Our top leadership, committed managers and valiant frontline workers decided to tackle both major health emergencies of Polio and COVID-19, simultaneously and with full force.

Since July 2020, besides supporting essential immunization, our programme pivoted to resume door to door campaigns ensuring all requisite protective measures. Since then, we have conducted 7 polio campaigns in various scopes using different types of polio vaccines to deal with dual outbreak of wild and vaccine derived polioviruses.

Mr. Chairman,

In 2021, Pakistan polio program is in better shape with a good control on virus transmission. We shall build on these gains and with the generous support from GPEI, donors and partners, our team aims to interrupt transmission of vaccine derived poliovirus by the end of current low transmission season and wild poliovirus by the next.

In the context of transition, COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the opportunity, and strong ability of the polio program for the cross-programmatic integration and collaboration. Pakistan plans to capitalize on this growing momentum to further expand its partnerships and build on the strong polio footprint to strengthen essential immunization and integrated public health service delivery to achieve our broader goal of universal health coverage.

Thank you.
