

# THE ISLAMIC ADVISORY GROUP

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## IAG participates in OIC health ministers conference in Abu Dhabi



Dr Al-Othaimeen (centre) praised the IAG key role in polio eradication efforts. Photo: OIC

The Islamic Advisory Group (IAG) participated in the seventh session of the Islamic Conference of Health Ministers hosted by Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on 15–17 December 2019.

Dr Yagob Al-Mazrou, Chairman of the IAG Executive Committee, briefed the conference on IAG's contribution to polio eradication efforts, particularly in the two endemic countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan, through training, awareness-raising activities and advocacy meetings.

He also underlined the efforts and activities of the IAG and its partners in promoting routine immunization and enhancing maternal and child health.

In 2013, scholars and partners agreed to establish the IAG to support the Global Polio Eradication Initiative achieve the goal of a polio-free world.

The IAG applies an integrated model incorporating technical and Islamic perspectives to raise awareness of priority health issues among local communities by leveraging the influence of prominent religious scholars.

OIC Secretary General Dr Yousef Al-Othaimeen paid tribute to the key role played by the IAG.

"The OIC has continued to work with its partners in the IAG to ensure its critical role in eradicating polio from the remaining OIC Member States and strengthen routine immunization and maternal and child health," he said.

In a video message to the conference, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus also praised IAG role in polio eradication efforts.

Dr Al-Mazrou also briefed the health ministers on the IAG decision during its sixth annual meeting, hosted by Al-Azhar in September 2019, to endorse the alignment of future work plans with the OIC Strategic Health Programme of Action 2014–2023 (OIC-SHPA).

This aims to help reduce maternal, infant and child mortality; support health system strengthening; advance health security and emergency response; and improve disease control in the 57 Member States of the OIC.

Dr Al-Othaimeen described the OIC-SHPA as a comprehensive health improvement plan.

"I call on Member States to provide the necessary resources to implement the OIC-SHPA," he told the meeting.

The conference was attended by representatives from 40 OIC Member States, including 23 ministers.

It concluded with the adoption of resolutions on, inter alia, healthy lifestyles; disease prevention and control, health emergencies and disasters; maternal and child health and nutrition; self-reliance in medicine and vaccine provision and production; immunization services and vaccine hesitancy.

The conference mandated the OIC General Secretariat to work closely with the IAG in aligning its activities with the OIC-SHPA.

It commended ongoing efforts by polio-affected Member States to ensure that all children are reached and vaccinated.

## About the IAG

The Islamic Advisory Group (IAG) was launched in 2013 after consultations between Al Azhar Al Sharif, the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA), the Islamic Development Bank (ISDB) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) who make up the core membership of the group along with other religious scholars, technical experts and academics. It aims to align correct religious teachings with technical information on priority health issues and communicate that to concerned communities by leveraging local religious scholars.

## IAG secretariat

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IslamicAdvisoryGroup](https://www.facebook.com/IslamicAdvisoryGroup)

[twitter.com/  
IslamicAdvisory](https://twitter.com/IslamicAdvisory)

[secretariat@lag-group.org](mailto:secretariat@lag-group.org)  
[www.lag-group.org](http://www.lag-group.org)

## WHO, IAG meet Malaysian health minister



Dr Al-Mandhari (right), Dr Dzulkefly (second right) and Dr Al-Mazrou (left) discussed cooperation with IAG

Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, and Dr Yagob Al-Mazrou, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the IAG, met Malaysian Health Minister Dr Dzulkefly Bin Ahmad and his accompanying technical delegates on the sidelines of the Islamic Conference of Health Ministers, hosted by Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in December.

Dr Rayana Bou-Haka and Dr Awad Mataria from the WHO Regional Office also joined the meeting.

They discussed the regional “Vision 2023 – Health for All, by All” and cooperation between the WHO and Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, particularly Malaysia.

The two sides also discussed cooperation with the IAG and the participation of Malaysian

Islamic universities in training religious students on maternal and child health issues.

Dr Dzulkefly was very supportive of the participation of Malaysian Islamic universities in producing research studies on global priority health issues from both the Islamic religious and technical perspectives.

## Polio update

So far, 175 wild polio cases type 1 have been reported in 2019:

- 29 in Afghanistan
- 146 in Pakistan

National emergency action plans and synchronized polio vaccination campaigns are being implemented in both countries to address gaps in coverage and surveillance.

## IAG Executive Committee chairman meets Indonesian health minister

Dr Yagob Al-Mazrou, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the IAG, has held talks with Indonesian Health Minister Dr Terawan Agus Putranto and his accompanying delegation on the sidelines of the Islamic Conference of Health Ministers, hosted by Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in December.

They discussed collaboration with the IAG, especially with respect to measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccination campaigns, which have been marred by challenges related to vaccine hesitancy.

The IAG has issued a statement of support to the MMR vaccination campaigns in Indonesia, home to the world’s largest Muslim population.

The IAG is working with UNICEF and WHO teams to facilitate a visit by representatives of Indonesian stakeholders to Al Azhar in Cairo and the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) in Jeddah, both founding partners of the IAG, to discuss and develop a plan to enhance the population’s awareness about the religious and medical imperative for vaccination.

The Indonesian minister has reiterated his full support for the initiative.

Discussions also touched on cooperation between the IAG and Indonesian Islamic universities regarding producing research studies on global priority health issues from both the Islamic religious and the technical perspectives.