



Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

## **Somalis to Form Action Groups for Immunizations Advocacy**

### **Community Responsibility for Child Health Protection Stressed**

**Khartoum, Sudan, 29 January 2015** – Prominent representatives from different regions of Somalia today concluded two days of meetings in the Sudanese Capital Khartoum with an agreement to form action groups in their respective areas that will seek to encourage and support polio and other immunization programs and to tackle barriers and misconceptions obstructing such vaccinations and other critical public health interventions.

The meeting, organized by the Islamic Advisory Group for Polio Eradication (IAG) in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Health in Sudan, called for strong support to national and global efforts for polio eradication and vaccinations against childhood illnesses in Somalia. The call was made in a statement issued at the end of the meeting that has brought together Muslim scholars, officials, civil and community leaders, health experts, communicators and other influencers from regions of Somalia as well as from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Pakistan.

The Meeting was co-organized by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) in partnership with the Federal Government of Somalia. The 57-member Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Al Azhar Al Sharif of Egypt are the two other founding member institutions of the IAG, which was launched in February 2014.

The meeting was convened at a time when the world is closer than ever for poliomyelitis eradication; there is only of the three types of polio viruses circulating and the most recent case reported from Somalia was in August 2014. However, some children in parts of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Somalia remained inaccessible for vaccinations that are deemed critical for their protection against the crippling and potentially fatal disease.

The chief and a senior representative of the Somali Red Crescent Society also took part in the meeting and its deliberations.

The meeting's Declaration urged Somali parents and community leaders to immunize their children against all vaccine-preventable diseases and reiterated that polio and other vaccines are safe, effective and fully conform to Islamic principles.

More than two dozen Somali representatives, Muslim scholars and several other participants were welcomed at the meeting by the Undersecretary of Sudan's Federal Minister of Health Dr

Essam Abdullah, who pointed out that vaccine-preventable diseases were killing more than three million people a year and that poliomyelitis used to be among the primary causes of permanent disability and occasionally of death. He hoped that “outcomes of this meeting would help Somali health authorities achieve polio eradication.”

In his speech, representative of the IAG Executive Committee (EC) Dr Albashier Sallam told the meeting that Islam places special emphasis on the health of people and the obligation to avoid whatever impairs the wellbeing of individuals. “Protecting children from disease is critical to achieving these objectives, and for this reason vaccination against polio is mandatory to protect all Muslim children,” said the EC Chairman’s representative.

In his statement, the Secretary General of IIFA Dr Ahmad Khaled Babiker said “Islamic scholars, Al-Azhar University, and the International Islamic University in Pakistan are united on the imperative of achieving polio eradication.” He urged Somali participants to build and spread awareness among their communities about immunizations.

Representative of the OIC Dr Nordin Razley said polio eradication and other immunizations continue to be a critical challenge for the Organization and that the three remaining “polio endemic countries in the world and some of the countries reporting polio re-infections are OIC Member States.”

From Egypt’s leading Islamic institution Al Azhar, Dr Hamed Abu Taleb told the audience it was quite incomprehensible that some people “resist vaccination against a very grave disease like polio and other illnesses although it is an undisputed Islamic duty.” The leading Islamic Sharia professor emphasized that benefits of polio and other vaccinations were abundantly proven and that they were therefore mandatory for all Muslims.

The scholars and experts also called on key Islamic organizations, philanthropists and policymakers to join hands in pursuit of effective contributions to the much-needed polio eradication in Muslim countries. They added that “it is the duty of all parents and communities to immunize their children and protect them from all diseases and life-long disability, and it is the duty of governments to provide critical health and social welfare services to improve the wellbeing of all children and the population.”

“We strongly reaffirm global Islamic solidarity and support for protecting children from polio paralysis and life-long disability through polio vaccinations, and that these protective measures fully conform to Islamic principles,” the declaration stated.

### **Notes to editors**

The Islamic Advisory Group (IAG), inaugurated in February 2014 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, was the initiative of the Saudi-based Islamic scholarly IIFA, the leading Islamic institution of

learning in Egypt Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, the 57-member state Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

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**Islamic Development Bank (IDB):** It is a multilateral development bank established in 1973 and started operations in 1975. IDB's membership has risen from 22 countries at inception to 56 countries at present. IDB Group comprises five entities: Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Islamic Research and Training Institute (IRTI), Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD), Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (ICIEC), and International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC). In addition, the IDB has various specialized funds and programs: Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development, Waqf Fund, Awqaf Properties Investment Fund, World Waqf Foundation, IDB Infrastructure Fund, Special Assistance Program, Scholarship Program, etc. It also manages the Saudi Arabian Project for the utilization of Hajj Sacrificial Meat.

**Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC):** It is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations, with membership of 57 states spread over four continents. OIC is the collective voice of the Muslim world, ensuring to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various peoples of the world. It was established by a decision made by a historical summit in Rabat, Morocco, on 25 September 1969. Website: <http://www.oic-oci.org>

**International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA):** It was established in 1982 by a resolution of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC). It has become the jurisprudential Fiqh authority for the Muslim countries. The Academy is a body consisting of scholars and jurists of the Muslim world that focuses on new problems presented by the contemporary world and proposes Islamic answers to those problems. The Academy is comprised of the secretariat and the Council of Islamic Ulama and Scholars from more than eight Schools of Thought (Mazahib): Hanafi, Malki, Shafi'i, Hanbali, Isnaashari, Zaidi, Zahiri, Asha'ari etc. They discuss new jurisprudential topics in all subjects, like worship, finance, medicine, relations and issue fatwas on them as decisions, which are accepted and respected by all Muslims in the world.