



***“If anyone saves a life, it shall be as though
he had saved the lives of all mankind.” (Al-Maeda:32)***

**Statement of the virtual Seventh Annual Meeting of the
Islamic Advisory Group for Polio Eradication**

**Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
07 December 2020**

Praise be to Allah and prayers and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah and on his kin and companions.

The **Islamic Advisory Group for Polio Eradication (IAG)** held its seventh annual meeting on 07 December 2020 hosted by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, under the co-chairmanship of Al Azhar Al Sharif and the International Islamic Fiqh Academy and with the participation of the Islamic Development Bank. Through the seventh annual meeting the IAG:

- Congratulates national governments, parents and caregivers of children, frontline health workers and volunteers as well as religious and community leaders in the African region on the historic achievement of stopping endemic transmission of wild poliovirus;
- Acknowledges the unprecedented challenges to polio eradication posed by the disruption of healthcare delivery, including routine immunization and polio vaccination campaigns, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and notes with concern that children are left more vulnerable to polio and other vaccine preventable diseases with enhanced risk of international spread of poliovirus;
- Commends the Global Polio Eradication Initiative’s “call to action” and the commitment of national governments to repurpose polio eradication infrastructure and assets including health workers, community mobilization networks, disease surveillance and information management systems as well as the global polio laboratory network to support the COVID-19 response;
- Notes that Afghanistan and Pakistan are now the only remaining countries globally with endemic wild poliovirus transmission and urges both national governments to fast-track efforts to eradicate the menace of polio in its last reservoirs; through enhanced national coordination and administrative mobilization and provision of essential health services to polio affected communities;
- Urges religious leaders and influential community leaders in Afghanistan and Pakistan to fully support ongoing polio eradication efforts and mobilize parents and caregivers in their areas to regularly vaccinate their children against polio as well as other vaccine-preventable diseases;
- Notes with concern the increased risk of the spread of polio to several new geographies due to the COVID-19 pandemic led suspension of polio vaccination campaigns;
- Recognizes the decision to establish the ministerial Regional Sub-committee for Polio Eradication and Outbreaks during the 67th session of WHO/EMR Regional Committee as the sub-committee will help mobilize all possible support to Pakistan, Afghanistan and all polio outbreak-affected countries including preparedness for potential use of the novel oral poliovirus vaccine type 2 (nOPV2) to control polio outbreaks;

- Welcomes the resolution by the 7th Islamic Conference of Health Ministers convened by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in December 2019 in Abu Dhabi, and joins the OIC's call for all its Member States, international development funds and philanthropic organisations to provide the necessary financial support to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative and IAG to continue their critical role in eradicating polio and implementing OIC Strategic Health Programme of Action (SHPA) 2014 - 2023;
- Joins the call in World Health Assembly's resolution 73.1 for international organisations and other stakeholders to work collaboratively at all levels to develop, test, and scale-up production of safe, effective, quality, affordable diagnostics, therapeutics, medicines and vaccines for the COVID-19 response;
- Appreciates efforts towards agreeing a memorandum of understanding between the OIC and WHO on technical information and technology sharing to benefit the Member States of both organisations and build their capacity in improving essential health services;
- Encourages other international development partners, religious leaders, civil society institutions and Islamic non-governmental organisations as well as global, regional, national and local media outlets including social media networks to support to the utmost efforts to eradicating polio as well as the expanded mandate of IAG, including Maternal and Child Health, during the ongoing unprecedented challenge of COVID-19 pandemic;
- Reaffirms its commitment to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative and in particular reiterates its trust in the safety and effectiveness of poliovirus vaccines as life-saving preventative tools which protect children; and further reaffirms that polio vaccines are halal and encouraged by Islamic Shariah;
- Appreciates the outstanding commitment and critical support provided by Al-Azhar Al Sharif, the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for the expanded IAG mandate and goal of polio eradication as well as supporting the countries during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as guided by the teachings of Islam;
- Expresses gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the OIC General Secretariat for hosting the seventh annual meeting of the IAG.