



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Meeting Statement

Fourth Islamic Advisory Group Meeting for Polio Eradication

Cairo, Egypt

4 Rabi Al Awal 1439 – 22 November 2017

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 fourth meeting at Al Azhar Al Sharif in Cairo, Egypt, on Wednesday 4 Rabi Al Awal 1439, 22 November 2017, under the co-sponsorship of the Al Azhar Al Sharif, International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and acknowledges to following:

1. Reaffirms its firm commitment to the global eradication of polio and reiterates its trust in the safety and effectiveness of all routine childhood vaccinations as a life-saving tool which protects children; and acknowledges that it conforms to Islamic Shariah;
2. Reiterates that parents and caretakers are under religious obligation to seek immunization for their children against polio and all vaccine preventable diseases, to protect both individual and community health;
3. Commends the great sacrifices made by health workers in the most difficult areas to protect children from polio, and encourages respect and support for their tireless and noble work;
4. Appreciates the efforts of thousands of Islamic scholars, community leaders, and Religious Support Persons (RSPs) especially in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia for their hard work and dedication that has helped bring the world to the brink of the historic goal of polio eradication;
5. Appreciates the notable progress being made in polio eradication efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan under the leadership of the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, while noting that small numbers of children are still being missed in certain communities during vaccination campaigns especially within mobile and nomadic communities; therefore calls on the religious scholars, community leaders, students and health workers to work closely with these communities to build trust and ensure the services, and calls on the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan to maintain effective leadership for the programme which is important to achieve the goal;

6. Notes that the upcoming low poliovirus transmission season in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which will run from the last quarter of 2017 through the second quarter of 2018, will provide the best opportunity to stop polio, and hence affirms the IAG's willingness to support all religious scholars, health organizations, and Governments that are focusing all of their efforts on interrupting transmission during this period by focusing on families and high risk communities and regions;
7. Welcomes the results of the assessment study of the IAG conducted to review its progress, processes, and interventions in support of polio eradication in the priority countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and calls for the implementation of the recommendations that can help improve the performance of the IAG and the National Islamic Advisory Groups (NIAGs) moving forward;
8. Supports the continuation and expansion of the student training programme in partnership with Al Azhar University's International Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research (IICPSR), and the development of manuals to train expatriate students of religious and Arabic language studies from priority countries on polio eradication and other maternal and child health issues; Calls on other national Islamic universities to engage in this educational initiative;
9. Acknowledges the critical role played by Islamic NGOs in providing humanitarian and health services to communities in high-risk areas, and therefore supports the close collaboration with these organizations and the establishment of Technical Working Groups to guide the joint efforts with the cooperation of the National Governments;
10. Appreciates the significant financial support provided by countries, philanthropists and financial institutions including the IsDB, and calls on these donors to continue their support for the programmes that the IAG has adopted, and for the health programmes of Islamic NGOs that would save children and communities in high-risk areas; such support will be critical to ensure the eradication of polio;
11. Thanks the media, in all their forms, for their active support, and urges them to continue to widely disseminate the messages shared by the IAG to build public acceptance for its priority activities;
12. Reaffirms the commitment of the Executive Committee of the IAG to advocate with the leadership of Islamic institutions and concerned Governments to ensure their ongoing commitment for polio eradication and enhance maternal and child health initiatives; and
13. Expresses its gratitude to the Government of Egypt and Al Azhar Al Sharif for their outstanding commitment and support for the goal of polio eradication, and for hosting the fourth annual meeting of the IAG.