

January 2019

Dear Polio Eradicator,

The global polio eradication effort is 31 years old.

The world is tantalizingly close to being free of polio. From 350,000 wild poliovirus cases every year in 1988, in 2018 the world reported just 29 cases of this devastating disabling disease because of extraordinary global efforts. Wild poliovirus transmission is endemic in only a handful of districts worldwide. The aim of the 2013-2018 Endgame Plan had been to be finished with this job by end 2018. This is not the case, and the Plan has to now be revised and extended through 2023.

This is an effort that cannot be sustained indefinitely: 31 years is long enough. It is resource intensive. It is intensive on the countries affected. It is intensive on donors. It is intensive on health services. It is intensive on communities. Most of all, it is intensive on those children and their families who bear the burden of this terrible disease, needlessly.

There is no reason why polio should persist anywhere in the world.

To succeed by 2023, all involved in this effort must find ways to excel in their roles. If this happens, success will follow.

This means stepping up the level of performance even further. It means using the proven tools of eradication and building blocks that have been established in parts of the world that have been free of polio for years. The vaccines, the cold chains, the networks of vaccinators, the surveillance capacity, the governance, policy, financing and oversight structures must be at peak levels of performance. There must be an unrelenting focus to tighten the management of the effort at all levels.

It also means looking for opportunities to innovate, using local knowledge and insights to overcome obstacles that in the past have seemed insurmountable. It means looking at new and different ways to reach children. It means really understanding the views of parents, and communities, who are unwilling to accept the vaccine and finding ways to address their concerns and come together with them. It means more effectively engaging with communities and better serving their needs than we have been doing thus far. Each person must dedicate themselves to one clear objective - to reach that very last child with polio vaccine.

Please commit to finding that very last child first, before the poliovirus does. Give the poliovirus nowhere to hide.

Whatever barrier to reaching that very last child, the programme has the expertise and experience to overcome it. Let everyone perfect what we know works. Let everyone free their mind to come up with new ideas and transformative solutions. We must all treat this as the public health emergency that it is.

As a global community, we have stood before where we stand today, with smallpox. The scourge of smallpox is gone, for which the world is a much better place. Let us make history again. It is time to finish the job of polio eradication now. The philosopher, poet and essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson said: *“To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition, to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived – this is to have succeeded.”*

Eradicate polio, and make the world a better place for future generations.

Thank you.



Professor Alejandro Cravioto

Chair of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on immunization (SAGE)



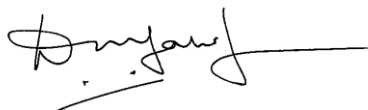
Sir Liam Donaldson

Chair of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative



Professor Helen Rees

Chair of the Emergency Committee of the International Health Regulations (IHR) Regarding the International Spread of Poliovirus



Professor David Salisbury

Chair of the Global Commission for the Certification of the Eradication of Poliomyelitis (GCC)