



*March 2019*

**Dear Chairs of the GCC, IHR Emergency Committee, IMB and SAGE,**

On behalf of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) and as current Chair of the Polio Oversight Board, I would like to thank you for your recently-published [joint communiqué](#) on the polio eradication effort. Your assessment of the current global situation, and what needs to happen to achieve success, is as accurate as it is motivating. Thank you for this strong call for action.

Let me assure you: all partners of the GPEI fully agree with you.

As a global community, we have been engaged in this fight for 31 years now. Wild poliovirus cases now persist in only a handful of districts of just two countries – Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In January, I was joined by Dr Al Mandhari, Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, and Dr Chris Elias, President of the Global Development Division at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, as we visited both countries where we witnessed first-hand the tremendous efforts being undertaken to interrupt the remaining chains of wild polio transmission there. I have rarely been so impressed by public health efforts being undertaken as in these two areas, as both countries work hand-in-hand to tackle this joint epidemiological block, as both countries engage and mobilise all levels of public and civil society to support this effort.

As you rightly point out, eradication is an "all-or-nothing" approach. We either eradicate, or we do not. And the truth is, everything in place for success to be achieved. The Endgame Plan through 2013-2018 has brought us to the brink of being polio-free. And the Strategic Plan 2019-2023 aims to build on the lessons learned since 2013. Its aim is to increase performance everywhere, including using the proven tools of eradication and building blocks that have been established, while using opportunities to innovate using local knowledge and insights to overcome obstacles that in the past have seemed insurmountable. The key is to optimise all these approaches, and if the Plan is fully financed and implemented at all levels, a lasting polio-free world will be secured for all future generations to come.

That is why I commit to you today: we will rise to your call to action, and we will excel in our jobs, and this will lead to the success we all want to see. As you challenge us, we commit to making it our overriding objective to find and reach that last unvaccinated child before the poliovirus does. We will give the poliovirus nowhere to hide.

Your continued guidance, independent assessments and oversight will be critical to help us in securing this success. It is this guidance which has been instrumental in helping bring us to the threshold of a polio-free world, and it will be your continued guidance which will help us

finally cross this threshold. Please continue with your assessments. Continue to critically evaluate what we are doing. Continue to issue your joint statements to draw attention to what needs to be done. We must have this oversight.

On behalf of our partners at Rotary International, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), UNICEF, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and mostly on behalf of the children of the world, thank you!

*Best,*



**Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus**

*Director-General, World Health Organization*

*Chair, Polio Oversight Board of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative*

*with my very best  
regards & appreciation*