Kabul, April 8, 2018 – A sub-national polio vaccination campaign will be conducted in selected high-risk districts in Afghanistan starting from tomorrow and will last until 13 April 2018.

The campaign starts at a critical time. One new polio case has been confirmed last week in Ghazi Abad district of Kunar province – the second case in the district in the past month, bringing the total number of confirmed polio cases in Afghanistan to seven in 2018.

The paralyzed child is an 11-month-old girl in an area difficult to access by vaccination teams. The child had never been vaccinated against polio, as the child's family repeatedly refused vaccination.

"This case is yet another important reminder to all parents that polio is a very real and serious health risk. Polio paralyzes for life and cannot be cured, but it can be prevented by safe and effective vaccines," said the Minister of Public Health H.E. Dr. Ferozuddin Feroz.

It is critical that all parents and caregivers across Afghanistan ensure they immunize all children under five in every polio campaign.

The polio vaccine is extremely safe and very effective and has been endorsed by leading religious scholars in Afghanistan and throughout the Islamic world. Only Afghanistan and Pakistan have recorded any cases of polio in 2017 and 2018 and while any child anywhere carries the poliovirus, all children around the world remain at risk of this crippling disease.

The oral polio vaccine administered in Afghanistan immunization campaigns builds immunity gradually, and several doses are needed for children to be fully protected against paralysis. To eradicate polio in Afghanistan, it is crucial to vaccinate all children in every polio campaign until they reach age of five.

A team at the national level has been deployed to conduct a detailed investigation and risk assessment of the case and the surrounding area to determine the immediate risk of further

spread of the virus.

The Polio Eradication Initiative is a global public health intervention that aims to end the transmission of poliovirus worldwide and provide all future generations of children a world free from polio paralysis. Since the initiative began, 123 countries worldwide have stopped transmission of polio.

Currently, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria are the only three remaining polio-endemic countries in the world. Nigeria has not recorded any cases since August 2016. Afghanistan has recorded seven cases of polio this year and this week Pakistan announced its first case in 2018.

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