

A technical consultation on poliomyelitis eradication in Afghanistan and Pakistan was hosted by the Ministry of Health in Muscat, Oman, from 6 to 7 December 2006. Addressing the two-day consultation, Dr Hussein Gezairy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean called for an all-out effort by all key partners and civil society in the fight against polio. He stated that, “After years of hard work, the only remaining focus of endemic transmission in the whole Region is the neighbouring border areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Joint efforts are essential to overcome the challenges of ongoing viral transmission.” He also acknowledged the ongoing efforts being made to eradicate polio in these two countries, as well as the recent decision made to further strengthen ongoing cross-border coordination in the fight against polio.

Representatives from Pakistan, Afghanistan and WHO staff from the Regional Office and headquarters attended the meeting. The efforts of the governments were commended in keeping the poliovirus confined to the areas of active conflict and preventing its spread elsewhere in Afghanistan and Pakistan as an achievement in itself. The task though is far from complete and that the consultation arrived at simple, practical measures to address the constraints slowing down the progress of the polio programme and to exploit every possible opportunity in vaccinating the children against polio.

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