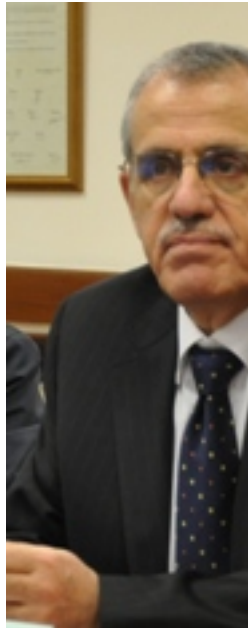


7 August 2012 – Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean,



Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean attends national polio eradication meeting in Pakistan visited Pakistan for one day to discuss WHO technical support to the Government of Pakistan in light of the polio emergency and to identify response actions to recent security incidents.

Pakistan has reported 27 cases of polio this year, compared to 71 cases reported at the same time last year. This progress has taken place following a massive effort by the Government and international and national partners to address the emergency.

These efforts have included increasing staff numbers, ensuring stronger accountability for polio eradication efforts at Union Council-level, systematically engaging local and religious leadership and ensuring ownership of the initiative at national and provincial/agency levels. However, the progress is fragile, the number of cases is slowly increasing, particularly in key areas, such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Area. Sewage sampling shows that the poliovirus continues to circulate widely.

Dr Alwan participated in the meeting of the National Task Force on Polio Eradication, which was chaired by the Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf. The objectives of the meeting were to examine the current status of polio eradication in the country, taking into consideration the operational and security context, and issue recommendations for the coming period.

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