



Islamabad, 2 December, 2022 – There is unprecedented support and commitment to ending polio in Pakistan by 2023, and with the current momentum maintained, the country will be able to interrupt transmission in the coming year, a high-level global delegation on polio concluded at the end of its visit to the country on Thursday.

The delegation was led by Chair of the Polio Oversight Board Dr Chris Elias, WHO Regional Director Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari and UNICEF Regional Director George Laryea-Adjei.

“The last steps to ending polio are the toughest but eradication is within reach thanks to the hard work happening in Pakistan,” Dr Elias said.

“During my 3-day visit, I was again impressed by the resolve of the government and community, especially frontline workers, to ensure polio is gone forever,” he added. “Reaching every child during the upcoming polio campaigns and strengthening the routine immunization system are now critical to success.”

The Polio Oversight Board is the highest decision-making body of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. This is the delegation’s second visit together to Pakistan this year. The earlier visit was in May following the detection of a polio case in Pakistan after nearly 15 months. The recent visit comes following the destruction of several health facilities and mass displacement due to catastrophic floods, which increased the risk of polio transmission.

WHO Regional Director Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari reaffirmed that Pakistan is in the “final stretch” of the road to eradication.

“The progress this year has well positioned the country to end all poliovirus transmission in 2023. However, ensuring that we reach our goal will require sustained political and administrative commitment during 2023, a year of elections and political transition,” he said. “Under our regional vision of health for all by all, we all have a role to play in ending polio through our collective solidarity and action.”

UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia George Laryea-Adjei said that Pakistan’s success in containing the spread of polio through joint efforts by the government, donors, frontline health workers and partners is truly commendable.

“The recent flooding has exacerbated health risks for millions of children, especially those living in districts historically at the highest risk for polio, so we must redouble efforts to engage

parents and caregivers to protect these children,” he said. “The end of polio is near, and we must now go the last mile to ensure every child is protected against this debilitating disease.”

During the visit, the delegation met the Prime Minister, Federal Health Minister, Pakistan Army’s Engineer-in-Chief and the heads of provincial governments of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh, and reiterated support to help Pakistan end poliovirus transmission by 2023.



Friday 3rd of May 2024 12:33:37 AM