

21 October 2014, Tunis – In a special session on polio eradication held on the sidelines of the Sixty-first WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, Pakistan gave a detailed presentation on the current situation in the country and highlighted the priority actions and procedures needed to accelerate and intensify polio eradication.

H.E. Saira Afzal Tarar, Minister of State for National Health Services Regulation and Coordination, Pakistan, reiterated the full commitment of her country to the cause of polio eradication. She noted that Pakistan suffered from a unique situation with strong resistance against polio campaigns and that more than 60 health-related workers had been killed during polio campaigns.

A military operation launched recently in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, where 80% of cases have been reported this year, had enabled immunization campaigns for children in those areas that were not previously accessible, she said.

Pakistan had also initiated various steps to ensure preparedness for dealing with the Ebola virus and would carry out all necessary precautions in this area, she noted.

Furthermore, the Prime Minister had recently approved a national health insurance scheme to cover the poor and vulnerable, which would cover a population of about 100 million. The Minister emphasized that the key to improving a population's health status lay in strengthening health systems.

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