



NAIROBI, 22 March 2022 – Yesterday, the Federal Government of Somalia, World Health Organization (WHO) and members of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) recommitted to stopping the ongoing outbreak of circulating poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) in Somalia at a three-day meeting convened in Nairobi, Kenya. High-level delegates at the meeting included HE Fawziya Abikar Nur, Federal Minister of Health and Human Services, Dr Mamunur Rahman Malik,

WHO Representative to Somalia and Head of Mission, alongside senior representation from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Rotary International, Save the Children, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and other UN agencies and partners.

Together, the Government, GPEI partners, which include WHO, UNICEF, the BMGF, CDC, Rotary International, GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, and other key partners endorsed the Somalia Polio Eradication Action Plan 2022 to reaffirm their commitment.

The Somalia Polio Eradication Action Plan 2022 outlines a four-point call to action to stop the spread of the current outbreak, which is one of the longest lasting cVDPV2 outbreaks to be reported so far. The robust plan aims to direct partners’ efforts and resources towards boosting population immunity, making concerted efforts to reach high-risk populations — including inaccessible and nomadic communities and internally displaced persons — to strengthen their immunity, enhancing the search for poliovirus circulation, and strengthening coordination among all stakeholders. Some of the strategies that will be deployed include intensifying efforts to offer 5 opportunities for vaccination against polio in 2022, providing routine childhood immunization in high-risk locations, where children have missed out on vaccinations, and strengthening community engagement. Given how easy it is for the cVDPV2 virus to spill over international borders, the emergency plan also advocates for stronger cross-border coordination among the

polio eradication programmes in Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti.

“In the midst of the ongoing drought, and while recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, our stakeholders must not forget how important it is to contain the ongoing poliovirus outbreak so that it does not spread any further and does not affect any more children’s lives,” said HE Fawziya Abikar Nur, Federal Minister of Health and Human Services. “On this occasion, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all our partners, and donors, for the immense efforts they have put into shielding millions of Somali children from polio over the years.”

“Since its inception 25 years ago, Somalia’s polio eradication programme has made progress, including by stopping outbreaks of wild poliovirus and, recently, one of circulating poliovirus type 3 in 2021. The programme has established a vast network of polio workforce and assets and we can do more not only to stop the current outbreak but to achieve broader health system goals through integration and effective use of our human and operational resources. Since 2018, Somalia has conducted several supplementary immunization campaigns. Despite these efforts, pockets of unvaccinated children remain, due to insecurity and limited access to health services,” said Dr Mamunur Rahman Malik, WHO Representative to Somalia.

The Somalia Polio Eradication Action Plan, which will be implemented in 2022, complements one of the goals outlined in the GPEI ‘Polio Eradication Strategy 2022–2026: Delivering on a Promise’, to stop cVDPV transmission and prevent outbreaks in non-endemic countries. It is also in line with Somalia’s national goals and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

For additional information, please contact:

Khadar Hussein Mohamud
Head of Coordination and Communications, Ministry of Health
Federal Government of Somalia
coordination@moh.gov.so

Fouzia Bano
Communications Officer
WHO Somalia
banof@who.int

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