

## Special updates:

### **Statement of I.R. Iran on: Polio eradication in the Eastern Mediterranean Region including the reports of the tenth and eleventh meetings of the Regional Subcommittee for Polio Eradication and Outbreaks**

#### ***Mr./Mrs. Chairman***

We are grateful to the regional director for highlighting this subject in her annual report. It has well addressed the progress made and the obstacles facing the achievement of polio eradication. The reduction of genetic chains and of vaccine-derived polio cases are significant successes, but the 3-fold increase in wild Polio cases is alarming and poses a major threat to eradication goal by 2026.

The I.R. Iran has taken actions in line with the proposals of the Polio Eradication Strategy 2022-2026. The country is committed to increasing interaction and gaining the support of all political and social leaders to ensure the continuation of coordinated activities. This national program has the advantage of integration into the PHC system, domestic production of OPV, and free immunization of all children regardless of nationality, race, gender and residential status, which all the mentioned factors, have resulted in a vaccination coverage around 99% at the national level and beyond 95% in all districts. Such a coverage has played an important role in preventing the spread of the virus in the country following the importation of wild and VDPV in from 2019 to 2021. It is important to pay more attention to the population movement across borders and its threat to the decline of indicators.

We would like to raise the following recommendations to WHO:

- WHO continued support to Iran's National Polio Laboratory is of particular importance considering the increased workload due to population movements from polio-endemic countries.
- An accelerated RCCE is critical to address vaccine evasion. In this line IAG (Islamic Advisory Group) advocacy can strengthen the access to vulnerable populations.
- Increasing financial resources with coordination and assistance of the organizations responsible for the health of immigrants, refugees and IDPs is fundamental. As an example, we really appreciate UNHCR for its support to conduct the polio and measles SIAs in 16 Iran's provinces hosting vulnerable populations in 2023.
- Razi vaccine and serum research institute has had an important role in the eradication program by producing OPV since 1974. In recent years, this institute has been involved in the production of injectable polio vaccine (IPV). The WHO support to this institution plays a fundamental role in providing the necessary vaccine for the country.

**Thank you Madam/Mr. Chairperson.**