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Sir Liam Donaldson  
Chair  
Independent Monitoring Board  
London  
UK

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Dear Sir Liam,

On behalf of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), I would like to thank you and the International Monitoring Board (IMB) members for your July 2016 report entitled “Polio will not end everywhere until everywhere ends it”, which did an excellent job of summarizing the progress and continued gaps within the GPEI programme. In preparation for the upcoming IMB meeting, I attach for your consideration a slide deck that serves as GPEI’s full report on the programme’s current status. Also enclosed is an update on the actions taken in response to the IMB’s last set of recommendations.

Since the last IMB meeting, Pakistan and Afghanistan have made significant progress towards stopping poliovirus transmission, and genetic diversity of the polioviruses detected in the two countries has reached an all-time low. In addition, governmental commitment to the programme remains high and the strengthening of community level vaccination cadres has contributed to fewer missed children in both countries. There are specific geographies, however, that require increased focus. Our major concerns include recurrent WPV1 positive environmental isolates in Quetta and Peshawar, risk of re-establishment in Karachi, continued cross border transmission in the Quetta-Kandahar and Peshawar-Nangarhar corridors, and poor quality of SIAs in southern Afghanistan.

The discovery in July 2016 of continuing wild polio virus transmission in Northeastern Nigeria was disconcerting for us all. However, it also served as a wake-up call for GPEI to more closely examine the circumstances which led to that failure. While four WPV1 cases were confirmed in August-September 2016 in Borno state, no additional cases have been found in Nigeria to date in spite of intensified surveillance. The Nigeria programme and neighboring countries reacted to the reemergence of WPV1 with a quick and massive internal and cross-border immunization response, and there has been no transmission of WPV1 outside of Borno. That said, significant risks and barriers persist, most notably continued inaccessibility to approximately 40% of Borno settlements, continued VDPV2 in Sokoto, and a somewhat waning national political commitment.

Outbreaks of circulating VDPV2 and emergence of new VDPV2 are of increasing concern as we move further away from the withdrawal of type 2 OPV and type 2 immunity continues to decline. While GPEI's capacity to respond quickly and thoroughly to VDPV2 remains strong, as evidenced by 2016-2017 campaigns in Borno, Sokoto, and Quetta, we continue to target improvements in detection and response across the partnership. Detection of Sabin 2 poliovirus as well as identification of residual tOPV in some countries indicated some continued use of tOPV; in response, SIA staff have been instructed to look for and collect any missed stocks during field activities, and supervision visits for routine immunization activities are reinforcing the need to search for and properly dispose of any residual tOPV.

Surveillance is strong at national levels, but many subnational geographies still fail to meet surveillance targets. To help countries strengthen surveillance activities, a dedicated task team was established within the EOMG to focus on this critical area.

GPEI continuously evaluates and seeks to improve its programmatic reach and performance. We have strengthened our budget implementation and financial accountability processes, assessed and restructured the task teams of the EOMG, and continue to collectively manage the available IPV to make the best use of this limited resource.

In 2016, the program achieved the lowest number of cases of WPV (37) that we have ever seen globally. We are committed to doing all we can to stop transmission in 2017 and achieving global certification in 2020, and welcome the IMB's guidance and expertise to help us achieve this goal.

We look forward to the upcoming meeting in London and the opportunity for further discussion of our successes and challenges with you and the IMB members. Please let us know if you or your colleagues require any additional information or clarification in advance of the meeting.

Thank you for your continued support to and involvement in this programme.

Yours sincerely,



Michel Zaffran  
Director, Polio Eradication WHO  
and Chair, GPEI Strategy Committee