

# **Global Polio Eradication Initiative**

## **Certification of poliovirus eradication**

November 2018

### **Statement**

#### **Global Commission for the Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication (GCC) reviews criteria for certification**

*Attaining and sustaining a world free from all polioviruses*

On 29-31 October 2018, the Global Commission for Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication (GCC) met to review the criteria that will need to be met to achieve global certification of wild poliovirus (WPV) eradication.

As the world approaches successful eradication of WPV transmission, the GCC's work takes on urgency, including consideration of circulating vaccine-derived polioviruses (cVDPVs). While these are not a new phenomenon, they become more significant, as does the need for effective containment of all polioviruses in laboratories and vaccine manufacturing facilities. The GCC has recommended a process of sequential certification of WPV eradication and confirmation of the absence of VDPVs, when the data become available. The Director General has accepted the GCC recommendation for sequential certification.

While the operational and programmatic aspects of achieving and sustaining a world free of all polioviruses – be they wild or vaccine-derived – have been well-established, the GCC is focusing its discussions on the necessary verification processes associated with this eventual achievement. Following the certification that WPV transmission has been stopped – and after OPV has been withdrawn – the absence of VDPVs will also need to be validated.

The assessment that all WPV transmission has been interrupted globally is the critical step which will mark the launch of preparations for cessation of all oral polio vaccine (OPV) use. Inadequate routine immunization levels coupled with subnational gaps in surveillance in high-risk countries continue to be the main risk factors for the emergence or continuation of cVDPVs. Both risk factors must be addressed. However, the only and surest way to prevent cVDPVs in the future is to rapidly stop OPV use, which can only occur after the successful eradication of WPVs. As such, the polio eradication program now has two urgent tasks – to eradicate WPVs as quickly as possible and to stop the use of OPV globally.

With no wild poliovirus type 3 (WPV3) reported globally since November 2012 (from Nigeria), the GCC concluded that the world could be ready to certify the eradication of WPV3, and urged the GPEI and Member States to ensure that full documentation is available to achieve this goal. This type-specific global certification would ideally follow a similar process as that used for the certification of WPV2 eradication in 2015. The GCC recommended that the GPEI conduct a comprehensive review of the implications of such sequential certification, and report back to it in 2019.

The GCC also continues to evaluate evidence that polioviruses will be rigorously contained where they are being held (in a limited number of research or diagnostics laboratories, and in vaccine manufacturing facilities). The Containment Advisory Group and the Containment Working Group guide the operationalization of this work, through implementation of the *WHO Global Action Plan to minimize poliovirus facility-associated risk after type-specific eradication of wild polioviruses and sequential cessation of oral polio vaccine use (GAPIII)*.

The WHO Director-General has accepted the outcomes and recommendations of the GCC and these will be incorporated into a global strategy for eradication covering the period 2019-2023 (currently being developed in a broad consultative process, and to be presented to the World Health Assembly in May 2019). The full report from the GCC's meeting will subsequently be made available upon publication at [www.polioeradication.org](http://www.polioeradication.org).

The GCC's work and efforts will assure the independent verification that transmission of all polioviruses has been interrupted globally, and that all necessary safeguards to sustain a polio-free world have been put in place.

*Additional background:*

The GCC is independent of WHO and of involvement in national polio vaccination implementation or polio surveillance programmes. WHO Regions are eligible for certification following the absence of WPV from any country in that region from any population source in the presence of certification-standard surveillance. Regional certification is conducted by Regional Certification Commissions (RCCs). Global certification will follow the successful certification of all six WHO regions, and will be conducted by the GCC.

As at 2018, four regions have been certified as free of WPVs: Region of the Americas (1994), the Western Pacific Region (2000), the European Region (2002), and the South-East Asia Region (2014).

**For more information, please see:**

<http://polioeradication.org/polio-today/preparing-for-a-polio-free-world/certification/>

<http://polioeradication.org/polio-today/preparing-for-a-polio-free-world/containment/>