

**Polio Oversight Board Statement: Polio Eradication in Reach,
with Renewed Commitment**



On Friday, September 25, the Polio Oversight Board, comprised of the heads of partner agencies of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, met to review program direction and provide guidance to strategies needed to achieve eradication. The members of the board issued the following statement:

Today, as global leaders gather at the United Nations to agree on an ambitious global development agenda for the next 15 years, we are in a stronger position than ever to meet one global goal: ending polio forever.

This goal is close to completion. As of today, the World Health Organization has the data to inform us that Nigeria is no longer polio-endemic, leaving only two countries in the world where polio has never been stopped: Afghanistan and Pakistan. For the first time in history, the entire African continent has marked one year without reporting a single child paralyzed by the wild poliovirus. Only one of the three strains of wild poliovirus is still circulating in the world (type 1); of the two other strains, type 2 has been verified as eradicated and type 3 has not been reported since November 2012.

The path to eradication was never expected to be easy. Conflict and increasing insecurity in parts of the world have made it more difficult for health workers to reach all children with polio vaccines; weak public health and routine immunization systems have left many children insufficiently vaccinated, resulting in outbreaks. Most recently, cases of circulating vaccine-derived polio (cVDPV) have been reported in Ukraine, Guinea, Madagascar and South Sudan, a risk we face in places where community vaccination rates are too low.

While the GPEI's mid-term review, executed this spring, found that significant progress has been made toward eradication and we have a strong framework for stopping polio, some shifts in strategy are needed. These include a focus on building stronger surveillance to ensure we're finding every last trace of the virus. We also need to redouble efforts and employ new strategies to ensure health workers are able to reach children in insecure and hard-to-reach areas with polio vaccines.

Due to the extraordinarily difficult political and security climate, the virus continues to circulate in its last reservoir – Afghanistan and Pakistan. With adequate financing and full implementation of proven eradication strategies, we have an opportunity to stop transmission of the virus in these two countries in 2016, paving the way for the certification of global eradication in 2019.

Achieving eradication will require renewed political and financial support from the international community. As part of the review, we requested an extensive analysis of the resources needed to end polio, which determined that we must raise an additional US\$1.5 billion to complete polio eradication. We will be seeking renewed and increased commitments from existing donors and approaching new donors to ensure full funding.

Ridding the world of polio will be one of humanity's greatest achievements, and we have never been closer. We cannot afford to let up now.

