

Polio Oversight Board Closed Executive Session

23 June 2025 | 7:00 – 7:30 PST | 16:00 – 16:30 CET | 30-minute closed session

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Chris Elias (POB Chair, GF); Mike McGovern (Rotary); Cecile Billaux (EC); An Vermeersch (Gavi); Ziad Memish (KSA); Omar Abdi (UNICEF); Matthew Buzzelli (CDC); Jamal Ahmed (WHO); Steven Lauwerier (UNICEF); Jay Wenger (GF); Carol Pandak (Rotary); Gillian Harris (GAC); Jalaa Abdelwahab (Gavi); John Vertefeuille (CDC); Gilles Fagninou (UNICEF); Allison Parker (UNICEF); Suchita Guntakatta (GF); Carole Presern & Lucy Phillips (governance review consultants); Sarah Standard (GF- secretariat)

Summary of Action Items

Action Point	Owner	Timeframe
Each partner to align on a recommended milestone for GPEI dissolution in advance of POB discussion and decision at the 21 September POB meeting.	POB Members	By 21 September

Discussion:

GPEI Governance Review

- Carole Presern emphasized that the governance review recommendations will focus on targeted, efficiency-enhancing changes. Based on feedback from key stakeholders, areas for discussion include clarifying roles, embedding immunization, country, and non-state voices in GPEI governance, streamlining committee structures, formalizing decision making to rebuild trust, and exploring Chair options.
- Mike McGovern emphasized that the governance review should highlight the importance of succession planning and look at rotating leadership positions across all aspects of GPEI.
- Ziad Memish requested more frequent and coordinated updates from key GPEI groups, advocating for regular briefings that go beyond the quarterly POB meetings for timely communications.
- Cecile Billaux noted the importance of meaningful engagement of implementing countries, potentially through direct participation, through Gavi affiliation, or other mechanisms to ensure their perspectives are integrated.
- Omar Abdi highlighted pursuing quick wins and incremental changes over a major governance overhaul. He also underscored country ownership and prioritizing engaging implementing countries. Additionally, he noted that while succession is important for the POB chair role, leadership continuity is also critical, and he also highlighted the time commitment needed for the role.
- An Vermeersch emphasized the need to prioritize empowering countries and integrating polio and essential immunization efforts at the country level, noting this is where the most impactful changes can be made.
- Jamal Ahmed, on behalf of Dr. Tedros, also noted the importance of enhancing country ownership and inviting implementing countries to share their perspectives during POB meetings.

He also noted that governance reforms should remain conservative to avoid any unnecessary disruption.

- Chris Elias requested that the governance review consultants outline several potential options for enhancing country engagement in the POB, to present for consideration in the September discussions.

September GPEI dissolution decision

- Chris Elias noted that at the October 2024 POB meeting in Berlin, the board agreed the GPEI dissolution milestone needs to be revised—no longer tied to wild poliovirus eradication as it stands in the 2017 polio certification strategy—and aligned with completion of the revised Sustaining a Polio-Free World (SPW) strategy by end-2025. This decision is on the agenda for the POB meeting on 21 September in New York. All partners should align on an internal position ahead of that discussion, so the board can make a unified decision in September.

POB Visit to Afghanistan & Pakistan

- Chris Elias provided an update on the planned POB visit to Afghanistan and Pakistan. The delegation includes Mike McGovern, Ziad Memish, WHO and UNICEF Regional Directors Sanjay Wijesekera & Hanan Balkhy, Rotary's Aziz Memon, and a representative of the EC. The visit comes at a critical time to discuss the trajectory of progress and advocate for strategies to reach zero polio.