

# WHO urges polio-endemic countries to completely halt the transmission of the wild polio virus by 2012

Eurosurveillance editorial team ([eurosurveillance@ecdc.europa.eu](mailto:eurosurveillance@ecdc.europa.eu))<sup>1</sup>

1. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), Stockholm, Sweden

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On 17 May 2011, at the ongoing World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva, Switzerland (16–25 May), the World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Dr Margaret Chan and Mr Bill Gates of the the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, met with Ministers of Health from countries with ongoing transmission of poliomyelitis to discuss the steps needed to eradicate polio by 2012.

Dr Chan urged the representatives from Afghanistan, Angola, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Nigeria, Pakistan and international development agencies to make concerted efforts to eradicate the disease by next year.

The meeting follows a report by the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) [1], a body established following a request by the WHA to monitor the progress towards achieving a polio-free world. The IMB held its inaugural meeting on 21–22 December 2010, then met again on 31 March–1 April 2011. The report affirmed the progress made under the new Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) but at the same time expressed concern that remaining operational gaps in key infected countries and underfunding are hindering progress.

In 2008, the WHA requested the Director-General to develop a new strategy to renew the fight to eradicate poliomyelitis from the remaining affected countries. In order to lay the basis for the new strategy, a special, one-year Programme of Work 2009 of the GPEI ([www.polioeradication.org](http://www.polioeradication.org)) was undertaken. The 2010 WHA acknowledged the progress made and agreed with the framework for a new strategic plan for 2010–2012 [2], which was then finalised and launched in June 2010.

The IMB will meet quarterly to monitor the implementation and impact of the new strategic plan 2010–2012 [2] against the major milestones and process indicators established for that purpose, and advise countries and partner agencies on corrective actions as appropriate. A WHO Progress Report on polio eradication has been presented at the 2011 WHA [3].

## References

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3. World Health Organization (WHO). Progress reports. Sixty-fourth World Health Assembly. Provisional agenda item 13.17. A64/26, 21 April 2011. Available from: [http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA64/A64\\_26-en.pdf](http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA64/A64_26-en.pdf).