



**Remarks by Ambassador Munir Akram Permanent Representative
of Pakistan during the Special Focus Session on Polio Eradication
at the First Regular Session of UNICEF Executive Board 2024
(8 February 2024)**

Madam Executive Director,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We thank the UNICEF Executive Board for convening this special focused session on polio. While the Secretary of Pakistan's Ministry of National Health Services and Regulations has outlined the operational aspects of our polio program, I would like to add a few important points.

2. We commend UNICEF for its very critical work in the eradication of Polio. With the support of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), UNICEF vaccinates 400 million children globally against polio every year in 190 countries. UNICEF's advocacy and awareness campaigns; safe supply of vaccines; investment in supply chain infrastructure; training of health workers; and its Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) initiative in Pakistan gives us confidence that polio will be eradicated from Pakistan soon, and certainly by 2026, the goal of a polio free world.

3. Pakistan has the largest polio programs in the world, employing around 340,000 polio workers, the majority of them are women. After the unprecedented floods of 2022 which adversely affected vaccination drives, due concerted efforts by the government and our global partners, only 6 cases of polio were detected in 2023. This year, the government has set a target to immunize 45 million children. To kick-start this campaign, the Prime Minister launched National Immunization Days (NID).

4. Despite challenges, we have made significant progress due to adoption of National Emergency Action Plan (2020) for Polio Eradication; massive outreach and awareness campaigns; Nomad Vaccination Initiative comprising of mobile vaccination teams; the establishment of the largest environmental surveillance network in the world; efforts to contain cross-border circulation of virus between Afghanistan and Pakistan and creation of the National Emergency Operations Center.

Madam Executive Director,

5. Pakistan remains committed to the complete eradication of polio within the set timeline for its elimination by 2026. The Government will make dedicated efforts to achieve this. To do so, Pakistan will require technical and financial cooperation from all our relevant global partners. \$205 million is required for Pakistan's polio program in 2024. There is a shortfall of \$95 million. We urge all donors and partners to contribute generously to the polio eradication efforts and ensure that children are vaccinated.

6. With the efforts of member states, WHO, UNICEF and all relevant partners, we have entered the final stages in the fight against polio. Urgent and bold actions are needed to eradicate polio by 2026. After smallpox, polio can be the second disease to be eradicated. Today's session gives us the opportunity to not only reaffirm our commitment to save the future of our children from the scourge of a preventable disease but to redouble our efforts to ensure that no child is deprived of immunization because of lack of funding or access to vaccines. Through our collective efforts we must realize the 2030 targets of the Immunization Agenda.

I thank you.