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WHO, UNICEF and Rotary International Joint Statement on WPD: WHO, UNICEF and Rotary International urge to sustain the gain in eradicating

polio and continue their joint effort for the end result

24 October 2019

24th October 2019 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Marking the commemoration of World Polio Day 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and Rotary International, jointly reaffirm their commitment to the fight against polio.

As we commemorate World Polio Day 2019 for the 7th time in Ethiopia, the WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus who is also Chair of the GPEI Polio Oversight Board and the Global Commission for the Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication (GCC) in Geneva, Switzerland are co-hosting the web based event today to declare the Wild polio virus Type 3 is eradicated globally.

With no wild poliovirus type 3 detected anywhere in the world since 2012, the GCC is anticipated to officially declare this strain as globally eradicated. It would be a significant milestone, in the global effort to rid the world of all poliovirus strains and ensure that no child will ever again be paralysed by any poliovirus anywhere.

Thanks to the leadership and continued commitment of the government of Ethiopia and its partners, almost six years have passed since the last wild polio virus was confirmed in Ethiopia. The Africa Regional Certification Commission (ARCC), an independent body of polio experts for the Africa Region declared Ethiopia as a polio free country in July 2017. We have also just celebrated three full years without wild polio virus in Africa and certification of polio free AFRO is to be realized soon.

Though it has no an effect on this polio free status, the recent detection of viruses from children in Dollo, Somali Region from viruses reported from Somalia and many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, primarily due to low vaccination coverage in the pockets areas of those countries, is a wakeup call for the need of refocusing our concerted efforts at the last miles of eradicating polio out of Africa.

The 2019 WPD shall be marked by the theme “Let’s Sustain the Gain to End Polio Now!” In an effort to maintain the momentum and finish the last laps of the run for a polio free World, we , partners, need to build upon our successes and counteract the challenges we are facing at the finishing line, a country free of any type of polio. Let’s reaffirm our commitment that no child anywhere in the world suffers from this completely preventable disease.

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