

Media Update

25 October 2016

United Nations

Statement

United Nations in Pakistan strongly condemns the attack on Police Academy, Quetta

ISLAMABAD, 25th October 2016: The United Nations family in Pakistan strongly condemns the attack on the Police Training Academy, targeting recruits and security personnel in Quetta.

We express our deepest condolences and sympathy to the families of all those who lost their lives or were injured in the brutal terror attack. Our thoughts today are with the Pakistani security forces, the victims and their families, as well as the Pakistani people.

“We are deeply saddened by the loss of precious lives in the blast; such attacks are inhuman and totally unjustifiable. On behalf of the UN System, I offer my heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims,” said Angela Kearney, United Nations Pakistan Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator a.i.



UNIDO

Press Release

New SME Policy to focus on mainstreaming women in SMEs

UNIDO in collaboration with ICCI launched an advocacy Campaign on “Women in Green Industry”

Islamabad (October 25, 2016) Khizar Hayat Gondal, Federal Secretary for Industries & Production has said that government was working on a new SME policy in consultation with all stakeholders that would focus on mainstreaming women in SMEs, especially in green industry. He was addressing as Chief Guest at the launching ceremony of Advocacy Campaign on “Women in Green Industry” which was organized by United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO Pakistan) in collaboration with Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry under its Global Cleantech Innovation Program 2016.

The Federal Secretary said that women were 94 million of Pakistan’s total population and their gainful employment, especially in green industry was of paramount importance for sustainable industrial development and more job creation. He said the new SME policy will address gender issues to enhance the role of women in entrepreneurial activities for their economic empowerment. He assured that his ministry would fully support UNIDO in proper implementation of this initiative that will pave way for green growth and sustainable economic development of the country. He said that as green industry has the potential to deliver on both environmental and economic objectives of the economy through improved energy security and sustainable environment

Khalid Iqbal Malik, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that a growing body of evidence has shown that increased participation of women in SMEs has highly positive impact on the economic growth of a country and government should take strong policy measures to promote women entrepreneurship in the country.

He said access to Finance was major factor preventing women from starting their own businesses. He highlighted limited access to information and



mentorship, small professional networks, limited business development skills, limited marketing platforms, social and cultural barriers etc. as other major hurdles in the way of mainstreaming women in entrepreneurship. He stressed upon the government to look into these issues for urgent remedial measures to create a conducive environment for women entrepreneurs in the country. He assured that ICCI would fully support UNIDO's mandate for green industry aiming at gender mainstreaming for inclusive industrial development.

Essam Alqarara UNIDO Representative said that the enabling policy environment coupled with deliberate action by government, private sector and development practitioners are necessary to utilize the full potential of women's participation in green growth. He said that women are important agents of change and a more equal inclusion of both women and men would propel green industry leading to better development outcomes for the country. The advocacy campaign is a first step towards more intensive interventions in the industrial sector of Pakistan to meet Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals 2030 to ensure equal & full participation of women in development of Pakistan. This event was organized under delivering as one UN programme

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WHO

Op-Ed

The Eradication of Polio: There Will Be No Way Back

Dr. Michel Thieren, MD, MPH
Representative of WHO in Pakistan

It is inevitable that polio will be stopped, with all likelihood even by the year's end. Wherever the virus is still actively transmitting, mostly in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the core polio epidemiological indicators attest that this virus is



actually on the run. The number of new cases – and the virus’ presence in the environment – is facing an historic decline, with low results in both countries. The last reservoirs of polio are almost cleared of polio cases and cleansed from the endemic strain of indigenous poliovirus. More, the genetic sequences of the collected viruses show unprecedented uniformity, stemming for its near-extinction. All trend lines are swiftly heading for zero, with no return possible to the dark ages of the crippling disease.

This World Polio Day 2016, which by all means is very likely to be the last one celebrated in a polio endemic world, is less an opportunity to set a final date for viral elimination, than it is to reflect one last time on the three meanings of a polio-free world for the next generation of children.

First, there is the moral imperative to end polio. Forty years ago, smallpox vanished from earth and created an historical precedent by removing the immense sufferings it had caused for centuries all around the world. Next came polio, with the unequivocal claim on the World Health Day on April 7, 1995: “Target 2000: A World Without Polio”. The decision to eradicate polio once and for all was taken not only on scientific evidence as being more cost effective than to control it indefinitely, but also as a global conscience that polio, like smallpox, represents absolute evil to public health. Poliomyelitis, few decades back, was a singular childhood horror repeated in millions of households across the world: the sudden and brutal withdrawal by the virus of the basic physical skill a child learns to master during his/her first twelve months, “to walk”. Eradicating polio is therefore exactly this: freeing the world from a crippling disease which condemns the most underserved children to a lifelong social death. This moral imperative is the prominent legacy of a polio-free world.

The second is the epidemiological imperative of ineluctability of eradication. No matter how entrenched the virus is and how hard it still is to find the last vulnerable, unprotected child, there will be no way back in the effort. Eradicating polio is a target that, by definition, bears no variance: no child will be left unattended. Utilitarians may view this otherwise. Half a billion USD, the annual cost of the program in Pakistan, may better be re-invested in interventions with much higher impact on child survival, such as routine immunization or breastfeeding feeding. Let us remember that Pakistan ranges among the lowest achieving countries on Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 associated with child and maternal mortality. But such a resource shift, right now, from polio towards other public health programs would signify a dangerous indulgence to a “near eradication” target, which



actually would be an “epidemiological oxymoron”. There is no room for a 99.9% decline in eradication: the goal is zero cases everywhere and no more viruses anywhere. Because polio cannot be ‘controlled’, it can only be eradicated. The handful number of cases, and their ten thousand times less frequent occurrence compared to many other lethal illnesses doesn’t provide any justification for the world to surrender the fight. Any lost terrain would irremediably re open sage heavens for the virus to transmit freely again. The 23 cases of this year would quickly trigger a dominos effect, with thousands of new cases falling down in just a few years only. Global polio eradication is unstoppable, and failure to eradicate would lead to 200 000 cases of polio per year, worldwide. Once achieved polio eradication will leave an immense legacy of practices that will benefit public health initiatives for generations.

And then comes the third meaning: is eradicating illnesses a messianic vow? As we enable the ‘sixth great extinction’ of species on earth, the small string of DNA that the poliovirus is shows remarkable resilience, having for long defied the most powerful and technically equipped individuals and entities in the world. The road from half a million polio cases per year decades ago to 23 cases today hasn’t been easy, and along that long night, the program had to reset its global target at least three times. Eradicating a disease is by any means “extreme public health practice”. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, this year alone, the Global Polio Eradication Program has delivered half a billion doses of OPV (Oral Polio Vaccines) to approximately fifty million children during nine monthly national campaigns through mobilizing 300 000 vaccination workers each time. This represents the backbone of an even bigger logistical and operational system, with the field presence of the world’s finest polio eradication experts. The story of the collective, sustained endeavor complemented with hundreds of thousands of individual narrative accounts has yet to be told. The take-home message however, for all of us on the ground in Pakistan and Afghanistan is very simple: Polio eradication works; polio eradication is much more than just a medical jargon and a “doctor thing”; it belongs to religious leaders, army personnel, security experts, peace negotiators, policy makers, the legislator and the executive; it stands on the shoulders of courageous anonymous professionals who, every morning are not going out to *work*, but with a resolve to *fight*. Most importantly even, polio eradication in its last mile requires the integral ownership and undertaking of the tasks by the community, in disregard to any top down programmatic intrusion from the outside. The “community based vaccination” approach is at the core of our count down to zero strategy in the next several weeks.

It is paradoxically when there will be no more polio virus, that the world will have reached its top capacity and *savoir-faire* to eradicate it. This ability will transfer to future eradication efforts in malaria and measles eventually. Eradication overall is a humanitarian and epidemiological imperative, and it is an imperative in its own. It reassures a constantly worried world about emerging health threats that actually deadly diseases can also be forced out. This is what the world is celebrating today.

