

## **International Donors express confidence in Pakistan's capacity to eradicate polio**

Islamabad, 12 October 2018 – Leading international donor agencies have expressed their full confidence in the country's capacity to achieve polio eradication in the near future.

Meeting of the key international donors and partners including representatives of the Islamic Development Bank, Rotary International, Government of Japan, Germany, Italy and Canada, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as WHO, UNICEF, USAID and CDC was called by the newly nominated Prime Minister's Focal Person on Polio Eradication Mr. Babar Bin Atta.

"Pakistan has made remarkable progress in protecting every child from polio which is otherwise a devastating, yet vaccine preventable disease. The number of polio cases fell from almost 20,000 each year in the early 1990s to only eight last year, and four so far this year," said Dr. Rana Muhammad Safdar, Coordinator, National Emergency Operations Centre. "Despite significant case decline, the presence of the virus in the sewerage water of urban settings indicate that the job is not over yet. We are working hard plug the immunity gaps by addressing the remaining challenges in core reservoirs."

"The Government and Prime Minister Imran Khan are fully committed to stopping the transmission of polio in Pakistan," said PM Focal Person, Babar Bin Atta. "We are not only going to sustain the gains made over the past years, but also to accelerate the progress by focusing on reaching the repeatedly missed children in next campaigns, especially during the upcoming winter," he added.

International donors and partners present at the meeting congratulated Atta on his appointment as Prime Minister's Focal Person on Polio Eradication and appreciated the Government's commitment to hit the virus hard during 2018-19 low transmission season and to end polio in Pakistan once and for all.

"We are proud of our partnership with the high performing country programme and will be diligently working with the new Government to eradicating polio from Pakistan," said Dr. Umer Mir of the Islamic Development Bank. The representatives of WHO, UNICEF, Rotary, JICA, CDC, Bill Melinda & Gates Foundation, USAID as well as the Governments of Canada, Germany, and Japan also expressed similar sentiments. Strengthening of routine immunization, focusing safe water and sanitation and addressing malnutrition in core reservoirs were among other identified priorities to achieve and sustain the virus interruption.

The Pakistan Polio Eradication Initiative is led by the Government of Pakistan and financed by a wide range of public and private donors. "We are grateful to all our international partners and donors for their unwavering support over the years. We will do whatever it takes to eradicate polio from Pakistan as soon as possible," said Atta.