



EUROPE

Regional Committee for Europe Sixtieth session

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Resolution

Renewed commitment to elimination of measles and rubella and prevention of congenital rubella syndrome by 2015 and Sustained support for polio-free status in the WHO European Region

The Regional Committee,

Recalling World Health Assembly resolutions WHA41.28 on global eradication of poliomyelitis by the year 2000; WHA56.20 on reducing global measles mortality; WHA58.15 on global immunization strategy (in which the Health Assembly welcomed the Global Immunization Vision and Strategy as the framework for strengthening of national immunization programmes and noted *inter alia* that a reduction in measles mortality would help towards attainment of Millennium Development Goal 4 of reducing the under-five mortality rate), and WHA61.1 on poliomyelitis: mechanism for management of potential risks to eradication, as well as its resolutions EUR/RC50/R3 on poliomyelitis eradication and maintaining polio-free status in the WHO European Region and EUR/RC55/R7 on strengthening national immunization systems through measles and rubella elimination and prevention of congenital rubella infection in WHO's European Region; all of which respond to the need for immunization to improve the health of all through the reduction of morbidity and mortality due to vaccine-preventable diseases;

Appreciating the progress made by Member States towards the European regional goals of eliminating measles and rubella in 2010 by implementing the components of the strategic plan while ensuring ongoing high-level advocacy through the annual European Immunization

Week, but concerned by the alarming threat to the European regional goal posed by the increasing number of measles cases and outbreaks, specifically in the central and western part of the Region;

Acknowledging that the European regional goals of eliminating measles and rubella are achievable but that there are remaining challenges that need to be addressed by Member States through high-level political commitment and sustained mobilization of resources;

Remembering that the European Region was declared poliomyelitis-free on 21 June 2002 and alarmed therefore by the recent polio outbreak in Tajikistan through importation of the virus from an endemic country;

Recognizing the potential risk of the further spread of poliomyelitis in the Region owing to existing gaps in immunization coverage, especially among vulnerable populations, and the need for financial resources to respond rapidly to future outbreaks;

Appreciating the rapid measures taken by Tajikistan in response to the recent importation of wild poliovirus, and commending the central Asian republics and other countries on their preventive measures to strengthen surveillance and increase coverage with polio vaccine;

Having considered the reports on renewed commitment to measles and rubella elimination and prevention of congenital rubella syndrome in the WHO European Region by 2015¹ and on poliomyelitis eradication in the WHO European Region;²

1. EXPRESSES REGRET over the deaths and disabilities due to poliomyelitis;
2. URGES Tajikistan and all other countries in the Region to maintain high-quality surveillance of acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) and strengthen immunization coverage;
3. ENDORSES:
 - (a) the new target date of 2015 for the European regional goals of eliminating measles and rubella while renewing its commitment to achieving those goals;
 - (b) the need to reaffirm its commitment to sustaining polio-free status in the European Region;

¹ Document EUR/RC60/15

² Document EUR/RC60/16

4. URGES all Member States:
- (a) to review and reinforce their political commitment and the human and financial resources required to accelerate actions to achieve the goals of measles and rubella elimination;
 - (b) to review and reinforce their political commitment and the human and financial resources required to maintain polio-free status, including responding rapidly to importation of wild poliovirus;
 - (c) to achieve high immunization coverage³ at subnational levels and monitor progress towards targets by:
 - (i) strengthening routine immunization services and conducting supplementary immunization activities, as needed, focusing on high-risk and vulnerable populations and ensuring the use of effective risk communication strategies;
 - (ii) ensuring the continuous availability of quality vaccines administered through safe injection practices; and
 - (iii) utilizing European Immunization Week as an advocacy tool, especially to respond to anti-vaccination strategies;
 - (d) to engage in partnerships, public and private, using a multisectoral approach, to ensure that polio-free status is maintained and that the European regional goals of eliminating measles and rubella are attained;
 - (e) to achieve measles and rubella elimination by:
 - (i) implementing and strengthening case-based surveillance using the existing WHO-accredited laboratory network for measles, rubella and congenital rubella syndrome, in order to monitor indicators for verifying attainment of the elimination goals;
 - (ii) developing or revising national elimination plans to address all components of the measles and rubella elimination strategy, especially immunization of susceptible populations, and conducting supplementary immunization activities as required to ensure two doses of a measles-containing vaccine; and

³ 90% or greater for polio vaccine; and 95% or greater for two doses of measles and rubella vaccine

- (iii) establishing a national measles and rubella elimination verification committee to document progress towards measles and rubella elimination and report to a regional verification commission;
- (f) to sustain polio-free status by:
 - (i) maintaining and reinforcing certification-level surveillance for polioviruses, using the existing WHO-accredited laboratory network for poliomyelitis, in line with the core capacity requirements of the International Health Regulations;
 - (ii) maintaining requirements for laboratory containment of wild poliovirus; and
 - (iii) updating national preparedness plans to respond rapidly in the event of an importation of wild poliovirus;

5. REQUESTS the Regional Director:

- (a) to provide leadership, strategic direction and technical guidance to Member States and specifically in coordinating the annual European Immunization Week, in order to achieve the regional immunization goals;
- (b) to engage in global and regional partnerships, to advocate for commitment and resources to strengthen and sustain immunization services, and to prevent and control vaccine-preventable diseases, including poliomyelitis eradication and measles and rubella elimination;
- (c) to establish a regional measles and rubella elimination verification commission in order to review Member States' documentation and verify elimination of measles and rubella in the Region and at country level verify that each country is free from indigenous measles and rubella transmission;
- (d) to facilitate the exchange of best practices and experiences among Member States on poliomyelitis eradication and measles and rubella elimination, and to use standardized indicators to monitor progress towards elimination targets;
- (e) to monitor and evaluate Member States' progress towards reaching immunization targets through assessments and surveys to validate the quality of data on immunization coverage rates; and
- (f) to provide the Regional Committee with an update on progress towards measles and rubella elimination at its sixty-third session in 2013.