



Statement to the 74th Session of the World Health Assembly, 24 May to 1 June 2021
on agenda item 21. Poliomyelitis

We applaud WHO's efforts towards the global eradication of polioviruses and poliomyelitis. However, we would like to point out the following:

Polio transition by 2023 is not realistic. Although significant steps were made towards the eradication of wild-type polio-viruses, COVID-19 has taken us many steps back. In several countries, polio workforce and resources were re-oriented to respond to the pandemic. Polio resources shouldn't be pulled out from health systems that still require them. We urge WHO to postpone polio transition so that countries are able to make arrangements to bear the financial implications.

We urge countries to integrate strong national immunization programmes in their health systems and build their manufacturing capacity to make the polio transition sustainable in the long term. We urge WHO to support the strengthening of weaker health systems and immunization programmes to ensure smooth transitioning.

The polio vaccine which has brought the poliovirus and poliomyelitis close to eradication was never patented. This has contributed greatly to vaccine availability and accessibility. We urge the WHO to document this experience and contribute this evidence to the WTO discussions on the TRIPS waiver on Covid-19 health technologies.

Lack of access to clean water, poor environmental sanitation and hygiene plays a major role in the transmission of polioviruses. We urge WHO to support countries in addressing inadequate access to clean water and other social determinants rather than just depend on vaccination.