

The Regional Committee,

Having considered the progress report of the Regional Director on the eradication of poliomyelitis in the Region¹ and the information document on the Regional Action Plan and Timetable for Safe Handling and Maximum Laboratory Containment of Wild Polioviruses and Potentially Infectious Materials;²

Acknowledging the achievements made by Member States towards eradicating poliomyelitis, especially the intense immunization and surveillance efforts that have been made to completely arrest the transmission of wild poliovirus;

Noting that, in 1997, only nine cases of poliomyelitis were reported in the Region, the last of which had onset of illness on 19 March 1997;

Noting also that as no new cases of poliomyelitis have been reported since then, under conditions of high quality surveillance, there is increasing evidence that wild poliovirus circulation has been interrupted in the Region;

Noting further that national certification committees and the Subregional Committee for the Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication in Pacific Island Countries and Areas have prepared plans of action for certification of poliomyelitis eradication;

1. URGES all Member States:

- (1) to maintain surveillance and laboratory performance at the standards recommended by the Regional Commission for the Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication in the Western Pacific until global certification is achieved;
- (2) to ensure that surveillance information is representative of the whole country;
- (3) to respond urgently and effectively to any introduction of wild poliovirus;
- (4) to continue to maintain high routine immunization coverage in all areas, and supplementary immunization in areas of high risk;
- (5) in the next 12 months, in collaboration with the WHO secretariat:
 - (a) to establish an inventory of laboratories holding wild poliovirus infectious or potentially infectious materials;
 - (b) to ensure that all laboratories that continue to handle and store these materials are doing so at BSL-2/polio level or above;
 - (c) to aim at implementation of maximum containment (BSL-4) for all wild poliovirus infectious materials remaining in their countries;

2. THANKS the international partners who have generously supported poliomyelitis eradication in the Region in the past year, particularly UNICEF, the Governments of Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States of America, and Rotary International, Rotary International Districts 2650 and 2640 of Japan and other nongovernmental organizations;

3. REQUESTS the Regional Director to work closely with countries:
 - (1) to ensure that external support is available to sustain surveillance and supplementary immunization until global certification is achieved;

 - (2) to improve and sustain the quality of surveillance to meet the requirements for certification of eradication and to ensure appropriate steps are taken towards the maximum containment of wild polioviruses and infectious materials.

¹Document WPR/RC49/7.

²Document WPR/RC49/INF.DOC./1.