

Cameron and Gates Pledge Extra Funds to Eradicate Polio

28 January 2011

- The United Kingdom pledges to double its current funding of polio eradication to US\$ 60 million
- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation commits a further US\$ 100 million to the cause
- Cameron and Gates promise to seize “once in a lifetime opportunity to rid world of polio”
- Funding aims to vaccinate an extra 45 million children
- More information on the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2011: <http://www.weforum.org>

Davos, Switzerland, 28 January 2011 - In a special message, the Government of the United Kingdom and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation pledged additional funding to rid the scourge of polio from the world, once and for all.

David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, committed to double his country's current contribution to polio eradication. “This funding will see an extra 45 million children fully vaccinated against the disease,” he said.

He urged world leaders to finish the job, adding that the new funding is conditional on matching commitments and making vaccines routine in affected countries.

Despite tough economic times, he said that rich countries cannot turn their backs on the world's poor. “It is never the wrong time to do the right thing.”

Bill Gates announced that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has added US\$ 100 million to the campaign to wipe out polio. “There is an incredible opportunity to wipe out the last 1% of polio, saving lives now and preventing the threat of outbreaks in the future.”

An intensive campaign is required. “Eradicating polio requires innovative thinking and political will, as well as additional funding to support an aggressive programme that will get the job done,” said Mr Gates.

Success in global polio eradication will energize the broader global health fight. Prior successes such as the eradication of smallpox in 1979 and the massive drop in child mortality provide inspiration. “We see 6,000 infant lives a day saved since the Annual Meeting in Davos in 2004,” said Bono, Lead Singer of U2 and Co-Founder, ONE campaign and (RED), ONE, United Kingdom

“We cannot accept the status quo,” said Margaret Chan, Director-General, World Health Organization. These new investments come at a critical time in the fight against polio. The window of opportunity is now. If there is polio anywhere, we are at risk of polio everywhere.”

Notes to Editors

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