13 June 2017 | GENEVA - World Health Organization Director-General elect, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has welcomed contributions and pledges of US$1.2 billion for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. The pledges were made at the Rotary Convention in Atlanta, USA which is being attended by 32 000 Rotarians from around the world.

“It is humbling to see again the power of this incredible global partnership to generate funding to fight one of the world’s most horrible and debilitating diseases,” said Dr Tedros.

A proportion of the money pledged will help WHO fund disease surveillance in more than 70 countries and enable it to provide expertise to help countries vaccinate 450 million children per year against polio. The Organization will also provide guidance on vaccination policy and participate in research into vaccine delivery methods, operational tactics and other approaches that can help accelerate eradication.

Thirty years ago, polio paralyzed more than 350,000 children each year in more than 125 countries around the world. Since then, the highly contagious virus has been reduced by more than 99.9%, and eliminated in all but three countries: Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan.

To date, there have only been five cases reported in 2017. However, serious challenges remain in the final steps to eradicate the virus: weak health systems struggle to vaccinate every child to ensure high enough protection within a community, compounded in some places by logistical impediments. These include remote locations, insecurity and even conflict.

“The new pledges show that donors understand the urgent need to support this mission right through to the very end,” added Dr Tedros. “We must finish the job properly to ensure that there is no chance of this terrible disease coming back.”

The eradication effort has been spearheaded by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, a public-private partnership led by national governments with five partners – the World Health Organization (WHO), Rotary International, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Since its formation in 1988, the partnership has prevented over 16 million cases of polio paralysis.

http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2017/polio-funding/en/