

June 22, 2017

Dear Colleagues,

Last week I attended the Rotary International Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, and returned deeply inspired by all those who are doing their part to achieve a polio-free world.

On the sidelines of the convention, global leaders came together to pledge new resources and reaffirm their commitment to ending polio. I'm thrilled to share that polio-affected countries and donors generously [pledged a total of US\\$ 1.2 billion](#) toward the US\$ 1.5 billion funding need.



Global leaders take the stage at the Rotary Convention to announce \$1.2 billion in funding for the GPEI. (credit: Rotary International)

Major pledges include: US\$ 75 million from **Canada**, US\$ 61.4 million from the **European Commission**, US\$ 55 million from **Japan**, US\$ 30 million from Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, **United Arab Emirates**, US\$ 30 million from **the Dalio Foundation**, US\$ 25 million from **Bloomberg Philanthropies**, US\$ 15 million from an anonymous donor, US\$ 13.4 million from **Australia**, US\$ 11.2 million from **Germany**, US\$ 5 million from **easyJet**, US\$ 5 million from **Italy** and US\$ 4 million from the **Republic of Korea**.

Building on a decade-long partnership, the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** and **Rotary International** also announced an extension of their two-to-one match agreement. If fully realized, this extended partnership has the potential to raise US\$ 450 million over the next three years. The **Gates Foundation** pledged a total of US\$ 450 million, including this matching agreement.

Following this pledging event, there was also a celebratory plenary session with more than 20,000 Rotarians. Bill Gates delivered the keynote presentation, where he acknowledged all those who have brought the world to the brink of eradication, particularly the role Rotarians around the world continue to play.

“When the story of polio eradication is written, it will be about millions of individuals linking arms and persevering in the face of innumerable setbacks,” Mr. Gates said in his speech. “Rotary laid the foundation with its unwavering sense of purpose and its belief that anything is possible if you put your mind and body to it.”

As you know, these commitments are more than just symbolic displays of solidarity and support for the polio eradication program – they have a real impact. In fact, this new funding will support crucial activities such as vaccination and disease monitoring, which will protect more than 450 million children from polio each year.

The importance of fully funding eradication efforts was made even more clear this month, when the WHO confirmed 17 cases of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus (cVDPV) in Syria and two outbreaks of cVDPV in the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#). The cases in Syria were identified among a cluster of 65 acute flaccid paralysis cases, and it's possible additional cVDPV cases will be confirmed in the coming

weeks. This is disappointing news, but GPEI partners have a demonstrated track record responding to such outbreaks and are working closely with the Ministries of Health in Syria and DRC to immediately implement proven strategies for quickly stopping the outbreaks. There are already vaccination rounds planned for the next few months to ensure children are adequately protected.

Additionally, Afghanistan reported a new case of wild polio this month, making it the country's fourth case this year and the first confirmed wild polio case anywhere since February. Afghanistan is reviewing its National Emergency Action Plan and making adjustments for the second half of 2017.

With replenished coffers, strong international leadership and continued committed efforts by the endemic countries, we will soon ensure this preventable disease does not needlessly harm another child again. We owe a debt of gratitude to all of our partners, donors, and supporters for their unyielding dedication. Thank you all for your steadfast support for this historic undertaking.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form the name 'Chris Elias'.

Chris Elias
President, Global Development, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Chairman, Polio Oversight Board