**NEWS RELEASE**

**Rotary announces US$35 million in additional funds to end polio worldwide**

**GOYANG CITY, Korea (31 May 2016)** — Rotary today committed an additional $35 million in grants to support the global effort to end polio – donating a total of $70 million in 2016 alone.

The announcement comes on the heels of significant strides made against the paralyzing disease, leaving just two polio-endemic countries – Afghanistan and Pakistan. If current progress continues, 2016 may mark the last case of wild poliovirus.

“While we are experiencing unprecedented success against polio, it is imperative to maintain high immunity and quality surveillance in all countries of the world until polio is fully eradicated,” said Michael K. McGovern, chair of Rotary’s International PolioPlus Committee. “We must protect the progress in polio-free parts of the world, as well as stopping transmission in Pakistan and Afghanistan.”

Speaking today at Rotary’s annual international convention, Dr. Rebecca Martin, Director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Center for Global Health, emphasized the importance of remaining vigilant. “All countries remain at risk for importation of poliovirus as long as it is circulating in Pakistan and Afghanistan”, said Martin. “Now is the time the world must act rapidly and together in stopping any outbreaks of polio. Countries need to detect virus and respond with vaccination through quality immunization campaigns.”

To sustain this progress, and protect all children from polio, experts say $1.5 billion is urgently needed. Without full funding and political commitment, this paralyzing disease could return to previously polio-free countries, putting children everywhere at risk. Rotary has contributed more than $1.5 billion and countless volunteer hours to fight polio, with Korean Rotary clubs donating more than $14.6 million to the effort. In addition to contributing funds, Korean Rotary members have traveled at their own expense to immunize children against polio in India. Through 2018, every dollar Rotary commits to polio eradication will be matched two-to-one by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation up to $35 million a year.

Rotary launched its polio immunization program [PolioPlus](http://www.endpolio.org/) in 1985 and in 1988 became a spearheading partner in the [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](http://www.polioeradication.org/) with the World Health Organization, UNICEF, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and was later joined by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Since the initiative launched, the incidence of polio has plummeted by more than 99.9 percent, from about 350,000 cases a year to 16 confirmed to date in 2016.

**About Rotary**

[Rotary](http://www.rotary.org/) brings together a global network of volunteer leaders dedicated to tackling the world’s most pressing humanitarian challenges. Rotary connects 1.2 million members of more than 35,000 Rotary clubs in over 200 countries and geographical areas. Their work improves lives at both the local and international levels, from helping families in need in their own communities to working toward a polio-free world. To access broadcast quality video footage and still photos go to: [The Newsmarket](http://rotary.thenewsmarket.com/).

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