



Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)

Implications for the Americas,
polio-free Region
7 May 2014

On 5 May 2014, the WHO Director General accepted the International Health Regulations (IHR) Emergency Committee's assessment and declared the international spread of wild poliovirus in 2014 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern ([PHEIC](#)). As of 29 April 2014, there are 10 States with active transmission (i.e. transmission in the past 6 months), and based on risk stratification they were designated as either States Currently Exporting Wild Poliovirus (Cameroon, Pakistan and Syrian Arab Republic) or States Infected with Wild Poliovirus but Not Currently Exporting (Afghanistan, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Israel, Nigeria, and Somalia).

Temporary recommendations effective 5 May 2014 were issued and are aimed to stop the spread of wild poliovirus. The situation will be reassessed in 3 months.¹

According to the [Temporary Recommendations](#) formulated by the WHO Director General in relation to the declaration of the PHEIC concerning the international spread of wild poliovirus, the primary responsibility of stopping the spread of wild poliovirus to wild poliovirus free areas falls on the States Parties with active outbreaks.

Mindful of the spirit of trust that inspires the current IHR, considering the scientific expertise represented in the IHR Emergency Committee advising the WHO Director General on this matter, and taking into account that the IHR Emergency Committee regarded the spread of wild poliovirus as an 'extraordinary event,' there is no reason to believe that additional measures of evidence-based effectiveness may have been overlooked.

In particular, for States Parties in the Americas, a polio-free Region, the vaccination coverage levels reported and the performance of the acute flaccid paralysis surveillance systems are considered as adequate measures, commensurate to the risk, to maintain the polio-free status of the Region.²

¹ The complete WHO statement on the declaration of the Public Health Emergency of International Concern regarding the international spread of wild poliovirus is available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2014/polio-20140505/en/>

² Please see [Report of the Technical Advisory Group On Vaccine-Preventable Diseases XXI Meeting](#): "Vaccination: A Shared Responsibility," Quito, Ecuador, 3-5 July 2013; Recommendations – Polio

- All countries must reinforce the activities aimed to achieve or maintain vaccination coverage >95% in every district or municipality. If countries do not achieve that coverage they must evaluate the accumulation of non-immunized and conduct vaccination campaigns.
- All countries must continue to maintain adequate AFP) surveillance in order to timely detect any importation or emergence of VDPVs, and must report to PAHO on a timely fashion to allow the proper monitoring of the Regional situation.

Considerations for the Americas Region

1. Any measure that polio-free States Parties may consider adopting in addition to those detailed in the Temporary Recommendations related to the PHEIC concerning the international spread of wild poliovirus, and that might have implications for travel and trade, should be analyzed in the light of Article 43 of the IHR and subsequent action taken accordingly.
2. **Countries in the Americas should not require certificate of vaccination against polio** from travelers or residents from States that currently export wild poliovirus (Cameroon, Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic) or from States currently infected with wild poliovirus (Afghanistan, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Israel, Nigeria, and Somalia).
3. PAHO Member States **may recommend** to travelers from the Americas and heading to States that currently export wild poliovirus or States infected with poliovirus, to be immunized prior to travelling. The immunized travelers should have appropriate documents evidencing such vaccination, i.e. the international certificate of vaccination or prophylaxis in the format specified in Annex 6 of the International Health Regulations. To this end, Member States of the Americas should take steps to inform travelers heading to those countries of the places where such certificates may be obtained locally.