

Statement to the World Health Assembly
Global Immunization is a Priority for Children's Health
International Pediatric Association
April 2012

Immunization is a core component of the human right to health. This year, more than 1.7 million children will die of diseases that can be prevented by vaccines. Approximately 1 in 5 children do not receive vaccines because of inadequate health services, extreme poverty, or armed conflict. Vaccines are one of the most cost-effective public health interventions, costing only a small fraction of what it costs to treat the illnesses they prevent.

The IPA recognizes the critical importance of the Global Vaccine Action Plan. We applaud the Decade of Vaccines for broad consultation with stakeholders. We recognize the need to strengthen country programs and to improve support for, and coordinate local, national, regional, and international partners. We urge countries to strengthen and sustain their investment in the GVAP goals: a world free of polio; meeting global and regional elimination targets; meeting immunization coverage targets in every region, country and community; developing and introducing new and improved vaccines and technologies; and exceeding MDG 4 target for reduction in child mortality. Our member pediatric associations stand ready to advocate for and help implement strategies to ensure integration of immunization activities with other health initiatives and programs. We support the GVAP principles (country ownership, shared responsibility and partnership, equity, integration, sustainability, and innovation) and look forward to engagement of our national member pediatric associations in strengthening sustainable child health care delivery systems in support of these efforts.

Eradicating polio is a critical step in meeting global health goals. Worldwide, thousands of children are crippled each year, and millions more are at risk. We support the goals of the recent WHO emergency declaration on polio. To achieve eradication, countries must fulfill their commitments to the necessary activities. We urge countries to fulfill their commitment to the GPEI fund, and to invest appropriately in delivery and surveillance activities.

Efforts to control and eliminate measles (~160,000 deaths annually), rubella and congenital rubella syndrome (CRS), which account for more than 100,000 cases of disability annually, require political and financial commitment. Public fear threatens to undermine vaccine coverage, and resurgence in disease requires action. IPA has a special emphasis on measles and rubella, to mobilize national pediatric associations, and seek commitments of support by countries for increased measles/rubella coverage. Integrated and focused vaccination campaigns, direct attention to public attitudes about vaccine hesitancy and refusal, and integration of measles and rubella within countries' vaccine delivery and primary care systems, are crucial to stopping these diseases. For the implementation of this program, we are in partnership with the Sabin Vaccine Institute, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Measles-Rubella Initiative.

IPA fully supports the GAVI Alliance (GAVI) mission to increase access to immunizations, including the introduction of rotavirus and pneumococcal vaccines. IPA recognizes the urgent need for countries to close gaps in funding that can reduce access to delivery of vaccines. We are working to support pediatric leaders in vaccine advocacy, communication including risk communication, social mobilization and sustainable financing. We recognize the need to build capacity in countries that are most affected, and we call on all countries to fulfill their commitments to implement the immunization services needed to serve the world's children. We urge countries to engage with pediatric and other child health clinicians to strengthen national efforts, and to provide advocacy for global immunization issues.

The International Pediatric Association (IPA) is a non-governmental organization with a membership of 144 National Pediatric Societies from 139 countries, 10 Regional Pediatric Societies representing all areas of the world, and 13 International Pediatric Specialty Societies. The IPA works collaboratively with member societies to mobilize networks of pediatricians for advocacy and programs in child health, working whenever possible with UN agencies. IPA works in close partnership with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) on global vaccine priorities, and with AAP and the Albert B Sabin Vaccine Institute (SVI) on the Measles and Rubella Initiative.