

**Statement by**  
**H.E. Ambassador Cheikh Niang**  
**Permanent Representative of Senegal**  
**to the United Nations**  
**on behalf of the African Members**  
**of the Executive Board of UNICEF**

*UNICEF Executive Board*

*First Regular Session*

*New York, 6-8 February 2024*

**Mr. President,**

**Madame Executive Director,**

**Distinguished Members of the Executive  
Board,**

**Excellencies,**

**Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Members of the UNICEF Executive Board.
  
2. At the outset, the Group wishes to thank the UNICEF Team for organizing this timely Special Focus Session on Polio Eradication. We convey our gratitude to the briefers for their insightful remarks and presentations on the Status of Polio Eradication.

**Mr. President,**

3. It is worth recognizing that Africa has made significant progress in the fight against polio. In that connection, we wish

to commend the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) for its commitment to achieving the goal of eradicating polio by 2026.

4. Yet, notwithstanding the noticeable progress, the non-wild variant of poliovirus remains concentrated in parts of the African continent, making children especially vulnerable to the disease.
5. With several countries on the African continent still experiencing the circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus, it is crucial that the GPEI and its partners intensify their efforts to reach every last child with polio vaccines.

**Mr. President,**

6. To eradicate polio, robust funding and global collaboration are essential. We therefore call on GPEI's stakeholders to fulfill their resource commitments.

7. Equally, it is our view that polio infrastructure must be integrated into the African countries' health systems. Fragile states are particularly heavily dependent on polio infrastructure for regular immunization and disease surveillance. This will sustain the gains and create resilient health systems to address emerging threats in the region once polio is eradicated.

**Mr. President,**

8. With the eradication window closing fast, we reiterate our position that, until all forms of polio are eradicated everywhere, and every child is vaccinated against polio, every country remains at risk of an outbreak.
  
9. It is, therefore, important that we continue raising awareness on the importance of vaccination. We must ensure that every child receives the vaccine to prevent the spread of this disease.
  
10. As Africa Group, we pledge to renew our commitment to accelerating our efforts in reversing the declines driven by the COVID-19 pandemic in the region.

11. We call upon other Member States to reinforce their financial and strategic commitments to achieve a polio-free world by 2026.

**I thank you, Mr. President!**