

**Special Focus Session on Polio Eradication at the
2024 first regular session of the UNICEF Executive Board
Thursday, 8 February 2024, 10 a.m.**

Transcript of pre-recorded remarks from
Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization
(2 mins 20 seconds)

Executive Director Catherine Russell, President and members of the Executive Board, dear colleagues and friends, thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

At WHO's own Executive Board meeting last month, Member States reaffirmed their commitment to achieving and sustaining a polio-free world. I know you share that commitment. And we are so close to realizing that vision. Last year, we saw the second lowest number of reported cases of wild polio in a calendar year, with six in Afghanistan and six in Pakistan.

More than 800 million children globally were immunized against polio last year. But we still face significant challenges to reach unvaccinated children in the few remaining districts of Afghanistan and Pakistan. And to curtail outbreaks of vaccine-derived polio in north-western Nigeria, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, south-central Somalia and northern Yemen.

In each case, we are working in countries and communities facing protracted emergencies that are becoming more complex, not less. We have the tools and strategies to overcome these challenges and interrupt transmission of wild poliovirus this year. It's ambitious, but it's achievable. But none of us can do it alone. We need each other.

Thank you all for your continued partnership and commitment to making polio history forever. I thank you.