



In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

VIDEO MESSAGE BY

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WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

on the occasion of

VACCINATION WEEK

IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

24–30 April 2013

This week, from the 24th to the 30th of April, we celebrate the fourth Vaccination Week in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, which is also the second World Immunization Week, being celebrated by countries across the globe.

Vaccination Week 2013 is focused on one theme, measles elimination, with the slogan “Stop measles now!” All the countries of the Region have set 2015 as the target for measles elimination: just two and a half years from now. This goal can only be achieved with the strong commitment of every country to increase measles vaccination coverage to at least 90% and to promote a high level of awareness in all communities about the threat of the disease and the benefits of vaccination.

Measles is a highly infectious, fast-moving disease. Before widespread vaccination in the 1980s, measles was responsible for 2.6 million deaths each year. Even though safe, effective and inexpensive vaccines are readily available today, measles continues to be one of the leading causes of child mortality around the world, accounting for about 158 000 deaths globally each year.

Immunization is the best investment in our future. Our Region has made tremendous progress in reducing disease and death due to vaccine-preventable conditions since the 1980s. There has been a significant drop in measles incidence, and nine countries are close to achieving elimination.

However, much remains to be achieved. In 2011, around 2.5 million children in the Region missed their first routine dose of the measles vaccine. There has been a resurgence of measles cases in several countries during the past 3 years. Measles still claims many lives in some countries. It is time to act, “Stop measles now!”

I would like to acknowledge the work of the care givers at the front line: vaccinators, community health professionals, doctors, nurses, managers and especially parents, whose dedication and support for immunization are keeping our children healthy and our future safe. I also thank the governments of the Region for their commitment to immunization programmes and to Vaccination week. I thank also our partners for their continued interest, commitment and support to immunization in the Region, but we all need to do more.

Let us use Vaccination Week 2013 as an opportunity to demonstrate our Region’s dedication to protecting our children from measles and our commitment to eliminating measles by 2015.